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THE

WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND

BEILBY PORTEUS, D.D.

VOL. VI.—TRACTS.

THE

WORKS

OF THE

RIGHT REVEREND

BEILBY PORTEUS, D.D.

LATE BISHOP OF LONDON:

WITH

HIS LIFE,

BY THE

REV. ROBERT HODGSON, A.M. F.R.S.

RECTOR OF ST. GEORGE'S HANOVER-SQUARE,
AND ONE OF THE CHAPLAINS IN ORDINARY TO HIS MAJESTY.

A NEW EDITION, IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. VI.—TRACTS.

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TRACTS

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

BY THE RIGHT REVEREND

BEILBY PORTEUS, D.D.

BISHOP OF LONDON.

FIFTH EDITION.

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A

REVIEW

OF

THE LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF THE

Right Reverend

DR. THOMAS SECKER,

LATE

LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

THE ELEVENTH EDITION.

FIRST PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1770.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

FIFTH EDITION.

THE Review of the Life and Character of Archbishop Secker, of which a new Edition is here presented to the Public, has hitherto been prefixed to the first of his seven Volumes of posthumous Sermons, and could not be purchased separately, nor, of course, without considerable expense. And in this state it would probably have remained, had not a very respectable and learned Prelate judged it expedient to introduce into his Life of bishop Warburton, such observations on the talents, learning, and writings of archbishop Secker, as appeared, both to me and to many other of his grace's friends, extremely injurious to his literary character, and the credit of his numerous and useful publications; and therefore highly deserving of some notice from those who loved him in life, and revered him

after death. Accordingly, these animadversions have been ably and completely refuted in a Letter lately addressed to the lord bishop of Worcester, by a Member of the University of Oxford, to which the world has given very decided marks of approbation. But as the author of that Letter has made frequent references to the Review of the archbishop's Life and Character, I conceived that it might still further promote the important end which both he and I have in view, the vindication of the archbishop and his writings, if I rendered that review of his life more accessible, by detaching it from his other works, and printing it as a separate publication. The estimate there formed of the archbishop's erudition and abilities, is undoubtedly very different from that which the bishop of Worcester has been pleased to give in his Life of Dr. Warburton. Both cannot be true. Which of the two, his lordship or myself, has had the best means of information, and which of the two accounts corresponds best with the opinion entertained of archbishop Secker by the best critics and scholars of this kingdom, I shall leave to others to decide. Be that

that decision what it may, by the publication of the archbishop's Life in this form, I shall not only enable the reader to judge for himself, but shall also gratify the warmest feelings of my heart, by the consciousness of having discharged, in the best manner I was able, one of the most sacred of human duties to a deceased friend and benefactor: to whose kindness, under Providence, I owe my first establishment, and much of my subsequent success in life; to whose instructions, virtues, and example, I am indebted for still more important benefits, with whose venerable name it is my highest worldly ambition to have my own united here, and with whom ('among the spirits of just men made perfect,') may a gracious God render me worthy to be more closely and permanently united hereafter!

B. LONDON.

FULHAM HOUSE,
May 8, 1797.

THE

LIFE

OF

ARCHBISHOP SECKER.

Dr. Thomas Secker, late Archbishop of Canterbury, was born in the year 1693, at a small village called Sibthorp, in the vale of Belvoir, Nottinghamshire. His father was a protestant dissenter, a pious, virtuous, and sensible man, who, having a small paternal fortune, followed no profession. His mother was the daughter of Mr. George Brough, of Shelton, in the county of Nottingham, a substantial gentleman-farmer. He received his education at several private schools and academies in the country, being obliged by various accidents to change his masters frequently. Notwithstanding this evident disadvantage, at

the

the age of nineteen, he had not only made a considerable progress in Greek and Latin, and read the best and most difficult writers in both languages, but had acquired a knowledge of French, Hebrew, Chaldee, and Syriac, had learned Geography, Logic, Algebra, Geometry, Conic Sections, and gone through a course of lectures on Jewish Antiquities, and other points preparatory to the critical study of the Bible. At the same time, in one or other of those seminaries, he had the good fortune to meet, and to form an acquaintance, with several persons of great abilities. Amongst the rest, in the academy of Mr. Jones, kept first at Gloucester, then at Tewkesbury, he laid the foundation of a strict friendship with Mr. Joseph Butler, afterwards Bishop of Durham. At the last of those two places it was that Mr. Butler gave the first proof of his great sagacity and depth of thought in the letters which he then wrote to Dr. Samuel Clarke; laying before him the doubts that had arisen in his mind, concerning the conclusiveness of some arguments in the doctor's Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God. These were written with so much candour, modesty, and good

good sense, that on the discovery of his name, they immediately procured him the friendship of that eminent man, and were afterwards printed at the end of his Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion. This correspondence was entrusted in confidence to Mr. Secker, who, in order to keep it private, undertook to convey Mr. Butler's letters to the post-office, at Gloucester, and to bring back Dr Clarke's answers.

Mr. Secker had been destined by his father for Orders among the dissenters. With this view, during the last years of his education, his studies were chiefly turned towards divinity; in which he made such quick advances, that, by the time he was three-and-twenty, he had read over carefully a great part of the Scriptures, particularly the New Testament, in the original, and the best comments upon it; Eusebius's Ecclesiastical History, the Apostolical Fathers, Whiston's Primitive Christianity, and the principal writers for and against ministerial and lay-conformity; with many others of the most esteemed treatises in theology. But though the result of these enquiries was (what might naturally be expected) a well-

 grounded

grounded belief of the Christian Revelation, yet not being at that time able to decide on some abstruse speculative doctrines, nor to determine absolutely what communion he should embrace, he resolved, like a wise and honest man, to pursue some profession, which should leave him at liberty to weigh these things more maturely in his thoughts, and not oblige him to declare, or teach publicly, opinions which were not yet thoroughly settled in his own mind. Therefore, about the end of the year 1716, he applied himself to the study of physic; and after gaining all the insight into it he could by reading the usual preparatory books, and attending the best lectures during that and the following winter in London; in order to improve himself still more, in January 1718-19, he went to Paris. There he lodged au Cloitre St. Benoit, rue des Mathurins, in the same house with Mr. Winslow, the famous anatomist, whose lectures he attended, as he did those of the Materia Medica, Chemistry, and Botany, at the King's Gardens. The operations of Surgery he saw at the Hotel Dieu, and attended also for some time M. Gregoire, the accoucheur, but

but without any design of ever practising that or any other branch of surgery. Here he became acquainted with Albinus, afterwards Professor at Leyden, Father Montfaucon, and several other persons of note. Here too was his first knowledge of Mr. Martin Benson, afterwards Bishop of Gloucester, one of the most agreeable and virtuous men of his time, with whom he quickly became much connected, and not many years after was united to him by the strongest bonds of affinity, as well as affection.

During the whole of Mr. Secker's continuance at Paris, he kept up a constant correspondence with Mr. Butler, who before this time had taken Orders, and on the recommendation of Dr. Clarke and Mr. Edward Talbot, son to bishop Talbot, was appointed by Sir Joseph Jekyll, preacher at the Rolls. Mr. Butler took occasion to mention his friend Mr. Secker, without his knowledge, to Mr. Talbot; who promised, in case he chose to take Orders in the Church of England, to engage the bishop his father to provide for him. This was communicated to Mr. Secker in a letter from Mr. Butler, about the beginning

ning of May 1720. He had not at that time come to any resolution of quitting the study of physic; but he began to foresee many obstacles to his pursuing that profession; and having never discontinued his application to theology, his former difficulties, both with regard to conformity and some other doubtful points, had gradually lessened, as his judgment became stronger, and his reading and knowledge more extensive. It appears also from two of his letters still in being, written from Paris to a friend in England (both of them prior to the date of Mr. Butler's above-mentioned) that he was greatly dissatisfied with the divisions and disturbances which at that particular period prevailed among the dissenters. In this state of mind Mr. Butler's unexpected proposal found him, which he was therefore very well disposed to take into consideration; and after deliberating carefully on the subject of such a change for upwards of two months, he resolved at length to embrace the offer, and for that purpose quitted France the latter end of July, or beginning of August, 1720.

On his arrival in England he was introduced

duced to Mr. Talbot, with whom he cultivated a close acquaintance. But it was unfortunately of very short duration. For in the month of December that gentleman caught the small-pox, and died. This was a great shock to all his friends, who had justly conceived the highest expectations of him, but especially to an amiable lady whom he had lately married, and who was very near sinking under so sudden and grievous a stroke. Mr. Secker, besides sharing largely in the common grief, had peculiar reason to lament an accident that seemed to put an end at once to all his hopes; but he had taken his resolution, and he determined to persevere. It was some encouragement to him to find that Mr. Talbot had on his death-bed recommended him, together with Mr. Benson and Mr. Butler, to his father's notice. Thus did that excellent young man, (for he was but twenty-nine when he died) by his nice discernment of characters, and his considerate good-nature, provide most effectually in a few solemn moments for the welfare of that church from which he himself was so prematurely snatched away: and at the same time raised up (when

he

he least thought of it) the truest friend and protector to his wife and unborn daughter; who afterwards found in Mr. Secker all the tender care and assistance which they could have hoped for from the nearest relation.

It being judged necessary by Mr. Secker's friends that he should have a degree at Oxford; and he having been informed that if he should previously take the degree of doctor in physic at Leyden, it would probably help him in obtaining the other, he went a little before Christmas from London to Rotterdam, and thence to Leyden. He took his degree there, March 7, 1720-1, and as part of his exercise for it, composed and printed a dissertation *de Medicinâ Staticâ*, which is still extant, and is thought, by the gentlemen of that profession, a sensible and learned performance. Gorter, in his treatise *de Perspiratione Insensibili*, printed at Leyden in the year 1736, makes a short but respectful mention of it in his preface. After paying a visit to Amsterdam he returned by the way of Helvoetsluys and Harwich to London, and on the 1st of April, 1721, entered himself a gentleman commoner of Exeter College in Oxford;

Oxford; about a twelvemonth after which he obtained the degree of bachelor of arts in that University without any difficulty, in consequence of the Chancellor's recommendatory letter to the convocation.

He now spent a considerable part of his time in London, where he quickly gained the esteem of some of the most learned and ingenious men of those days, particularly of Dr. Clarke, rector of St. James's, and the celebrated dean Berkeley, afterwards bishop of Cloyne, with whom he every day became more delighted and more closely connected. He paid frequent visits of gratitude and friendship to Mrs. Talbot, widow of Mr. Edward Talbot, by whom she had a daughter five months after his decease. With her lived Mrs. Catharine Benson, sister to bishop Benson, whom in many respects she greatly resembled. She had been for several years Mrs. Talbot's inseparable companion, and was of unspeakable service to her at the time of her husband's death, by exerting all her courage, activity, and good sense (of which she possessed a large share) to support her friend under so great an affliction; and by

afterwards

afterwards attending her sickly infant with the utmost care and tenderness, to which, under Providence, was owing the preservation of a very valuable life.

Bishop Talbot being in November 1721 appointed to the see of Durham, Mr. Secker was in December 1722 ordained deacon by him in St. James's church, and priest not long after in the same place, where he preached his first sermon, March 28, 1723. The bishop's domestic chaplain at that time was Dr. Rundle, a man of warm fancy, and very brilliant conversation, but apt sometimes to be carried by the vivacity of his wit into indiscreet and ludicrous expressions, which created him enemies, and on one occasion produced disagreeable consequences. With him Mr. Secker was soon after associated in the bishop's family, and both taken down by his lordship to Durham in July 1723.

On the death of Sir George Wheeler, in 1723-4, the bishop gave his prebend of Durham to Mr. Benson, and the rectory of Houghton-le-Spring to Mr. Secker. This valuable piece of preferment putting it in his power to fix himself in the world in a manner

agreeable

agreeable to his inclinations, he soon after made a proposal of marriage to Mrs. Benson above-mentioned; which being accepted, they were married by Bishop Talbot in King-street chapel, October 28, 1725. At the earnest desire of both, Mrs. Talbot and her daughter consented to live with them, and the two families from that time became one.

Not long before this, Bishop Talbot had given the rectory of Houghton, near Darlington, to Mr. Butler. There was a necessity for rebuilding a great part of the parsonage-house, and Mr. Butler had neither money nor talents for that work. Mr. Secker therefore, who had his friends always in his thoughts, and was now in great favour with his patron, persuaded him to give Mr. Butler, in exchange for Houghton, the rectory of Stanhope, which was of much greater value, and without any such incumbrance. In the winter of 1725-6, Mr. Butler published the first edition of his incomparable sermons. Mr. Secker took much pains to render his style more familiar, and his meaning more obvious. Yet they were at last by many called obscure. But whatever requires

 attention

attention is not of course obscure. No one (as Dr. Clarke rightly observed on this occasion) ever imputed obscurity to Euclid's Elements. Difficulties they may have, but difficulties soon mastered by the degree of attention which such subjects require. Mr. Secker gave his friend the same assistance in the discourse prefixed to the second edition, and also in that noble work, which he afterwards published, the Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed, to the Constitution and Course of Nature.

He now gave up all the time he possibly could to his residence at Houghton. He applied himself with alacrity to all the duties of a country clergyman, and supported that useful and respectable character throughout with the strictest propriety. He omitted nothing which he thought could be of use to the souls and bodies of the people entrusted to his care. He brought down his conversation and his sermons to the level of their understandings; he visited them in private, he catechised the young and ignorant, he received his country neighbours and tenants kindly and hospitably, and was of great service to the poorer sort of them by his skill in

physic,

physic, which was the only use he ever made of it. Though this place was in a very remote part of the world, yet the solitude of it perfectly suited his studious disposition, and the income arising from it bounded his ambition. Here he would have been content to live and die; here, as he has often been heard to declare, he spent some of the happiest hours of his life; and it was no thought or choice of his own that removed him to a higher and more public sphere. But Mrs. Secker's health, which began now to be very precarious, and was thought to have been injured by the dampness of the situation, obliged him to think of exchanging it for a more healthy one. And Dr. Finney, prebendary of Durham, and rector of Ryton, being old and infirm, Mr. Benson requested the Bishop, through Dr. Rundle, that Mr. Secker might succeed him, and resign Houghton. This meeting with difficulties, Mr. Benson, in order to remove them, very generously gave up his Prebend of Sarum, to accommodate the person for whom Ryton was designed, and then Mr. Secker was allowed to make the exchange above-mentioned. He went up to London,

and was instituted to Ryton and the prebend, June 3, 1727, and for the two following years lived chiefly at Durham, going over every week to officiate at Ryton, and spending there two or three months together in the summer.

In July 1732, the duke of Grafton, then lord chamberlain, appointed him chaplain to the King. For this favour he was indebted to Bishop Sherlock, who having heard him preach at Bath, had conceived the highest opinion of his abilities, and thought them well worthy of being brought forwards into public notice. From that time an intimacy commenced betwixt them, and he received from that great prelate many solid proofs of esteem and friendship.

His month of waiting at St. James's happened to be August, and on Sunday the 27th of that month he preached before the Queen, the King being then abroad. A few days after, her majesty sent for him into her closet, and held a long and gracious conversation with him. In the course of it he took an opportunity of mentioning to her his friend Mr. Butler. The Queen said, she thought he had been dead. Mr. Secker assured her he was not.

not. Yet her majesty afterwards asked archbishop Blackburne if he was not dead? His answer was, 'No, madam, but he is buried.' And indeed the retirement of Stanhope, where he spent almost his whole time, was too solitary for his disposition, which had in it a natural cast of gloominess. And though these recluse hours were by no means lost either to private improvement or public utility, yet he felt at times, very painfully, the want of that select society of friends, to which he had been accustomed, and which could inspire him with the greatest cheerfulness. Mr. Secker, who knew this, was extremely anxious to draw him out into a more active and conspicuous scene, and omitted no opportunity of expressing this desire to such as he thought capable of promoting it. And not long after this, on Mr. Talbot's being made lord chancellor, he found means to have Mr. Butler recommended to him for his chaplain. His lordship accepted and sent for him. This promotion bringing him back into the world, the Queen very soon appointed him her clerk of the closet, from whence he rose, as his talents became

more

more known, to those high dignities which he afterwards enjoyed.

Mr. Secker now began to have a public character and stood high in the estimation of those who were allowed to be the best judges of merit. He had already given proofs of abilities that plainly indicated the eminence to which he must one day rise, as a preacher and a divine; and it was not long before an opportunity offered of placing him in an advantageous point of view. Dr. Tyrwhitt, who succeeded Dr. Clarke as rector of St. James's, in 1729, found that preaching in so large a church endangered his health. Bishop Gibson therefore, his father-in-law, proposed to the crown that he should be made residentiary of St. Paul's, and that Mr. Secker should succeed him in the rectory. This arrangement was so acceptable to those in power that it took place without any difficulty. Mr. Secker was instituted rector the 18th of May 1733, and in the beginning of July went to Oxford to take his degree of Doctor of Laws, not being of sufficient standing for that of Divinity. On this occasion it was that he preached his celebrated

brated Act Sermon on the advantages and the duties of academical education, which was universally allowed to be a master-piece of sound reasoning and just composition. It was printed at the desire of the heads of houses, and quickly passed through several editions. It is now to be found in the second collection of his occasional Sermons, published by himself in 1766.

He was censured in a paper called The Weekly Miscellany, for not quoting texts of Scripture in this sermon. The only notice he took of that censure was by contributing very liberally for many years towards supporting the author of it.

At his next waiting at Hampton-court, the Queen again sent for him, and said very obliging things to him of this sermon. And it was thought the reputation he had acquired by it contributed not a little towards that promotion which very soon followed its publication. For in December 1734 he received a very unexpected notice, by letter, from bishop Gibson, that the King had fixed upon him to be bishop of Bristol. Dr. Rundle had a little before this been proposed by the

lord

lord chancellor Talbot for the see of Gloucester, but on account of some imprudences of speech charged on the doctor by Mr. Venn, the bishop of London opposed this nomination, and with much difficulty prevailed on Dr. Benson to accept that dignity. Dr. Fleming was about the same time promoted to the see of Carlisle; and the three new bishops were all consecrated together in Lambeth chapel, Jan. 19, 1734-5, the consecration sermon being preached by Dr. Thomas, now bishop of Winchester.

The honours to which Dr. Secker was thus raised in the prime of life did not in the least abate his diligence and attention to business; for which indeed there was now more occasion than ever. He immediately set about the visitation of his diocese, confirmed in a great number of places, preached in several churches, sometimes twice a day, and, from the informations received in his progress, laid the foundation of a parochial account of his diocese, for the benefit of his successors. Finding at the same time, the affairs of his parish of St. James in great disorder, he took the trouble, in concert with a few others, to put the accounts

counts of the several officers into a regular method, drew up a set of excellent rules to direct them better for the future, and by the large share which he always took in the management of the poor, and the regulation of many other parochial concerns, was of signal service to his parishioners, even in a temporal view. But it was their spiritual welfare which engaged, as it ought to do, his chief attention. As far as the circumstances of the times and the populousness of that polite part of the metropolis allowed, he omitted not even those private admonitions and personal applications which are often attended with the happiest effects. Not being able, however, to do so much in this way as he wished, he was peculiarly assiduous in giving and promoting every kind of public instruction. He allowed out of his own income a salary for reading early and late prayers, which had formerly been paid out of the offertory money. He held a confirmation once every year, and examined and instructed the candidates several weeks before in the vestry, and gave them religious tracts, which he also distributed, at other times, very liberally to those that needed them.

them. He drew up for the use of his parishioners that admirable course of Lectures on the Church Catechism, which have been lately published, and not only read them once every week on the usual days, but also every Sunday evening, either at the church or one of the chapels belonging to it. They were received with universal approbation, and attended regularly by persons of all ages and conditions. The judgment of the public has since confirmed the opinion of his parishioners, and established the reputation of this work, as one of the fullest, clearest, and exactest compendiums of revealed religion that the English language affords.

The sermons which at the same time he set himself to compose were truly excellent and original. His faculties were now in their full vigour, and he had an audience to speak before, that rendered the utmost exertion of them necessary. He did not however seek to gratify the higher part by amusing them with refined speculations or ingenious essays, unintelligible to the lower part, and unprofitable to both; but he laid before them all, with equal freedom and plainness, the great christian

tian duties belonging to their respective stations, and reproved the follies and vices of every rank amongst them without distinction or palliation. He studied human nature thoroughly in all its various forms, and knew what sort of arguments would have most weight with each class of men. He brought the subject home to their bosoms, and did not seem to be merely saying useful things in their presence, but addressing himself personally to every one of them. Few ever possessed in a higher degree, the rare talent of touching on the most delicate subjects with the nicest propriety and decorum, of saying the most familiar things without being low, the plainest without being feeble, the boldest without giving offence. He could descend with such singular ease and felicity into the minutest concerns of common life, could lay open with so much address the various workings, artifices, and evasions of the human mind, that his audience often thought their own particular cases alluded to, and heard with surprise their private sentiments and feelings, their ways of reasoning and principles of acting, exactly stated and described. His preach-

ing

ing was, at the same time, highly rational and truly evangelical. He explained with perspicuity, he asserted with dignity, the peculiar characteristic doctrines of the gospel. He inculcated the utility, the necessity of them, not merely as speculative truths, but as actual instruments of moral goodness, tending to purify the hearts, and regulate the lives of men; and thus, by God's gracious appointment, as well as by the inseparable connection betwixt true faith and right practice, leading them to salvation.

These important truths he taught with the authority, the tenderness, the familiarity, of a parent instructing his children. Though he neither possessed nor affected the artificial eloquence of an orator who wants only to amuse or to mislead, yet he had that of an honest man who wants to convince, of a christian preacher who wants to reform and to save those that hear him. Solid argument, manly sense, useful directions, short, nervous, striking sentences, awakening questions, frequent and pertinent applications of Scripture; all these following each other in quick succession, and coming evidently from the speaker's heart,

enforced

enforced by his elocution, his figure, his action, and above all by the corresponding sanctity of his example, stamped conviction on the minds of his hearers and sent them home with impressions not easy to be effaced. It will readily be imagined that with these powers he quickly became one of the most admired and popular preachers of his time. And though it is not to be expected that his sermons will now afford the same pleasure, or produce the same effects, in the closet, that they did from the pulpit, accompanied as they then were with all the advantages of his delivery; yet it will plainly appear, that the applause they met with was founded no less on the matter they contained, than the manner in which they were spoken *.

On the death of archbishop Wake, Dr. Potter was appointed to succeed him in the see of Canterbury, and that of Oxford was offered to Dr. Secker, who at first declined it. But at the earnest request of bishop Sherlock, who was desirous to obtain the bishopric of Bristol for his brother-in-law Dr. Gooch, he

* See the Letter to the Lord Bishop of *Worcester*. Edit. 2d. p. 32.

was

was at length prevailed on to accept the proposal, and was confirmed bishop of Oxford in the month of May, 1737. Towards the end of the same year died Queen Caroline, and the Sunday following bishop Secker preached a sermon on that occasion, at St. James's church, which the princesses desired to see, and shewed it to the King, who read it. It was afterwards published in the second volume of his Occasional Sermons, which appeared in his lifetime.

When the unfortunate breach happened betwixt the late King and the prince of Wales, his royal highness having removed to Norfolk-House, which is in the parish of St. James's, attended divine service constantly in that church. The first time he came there, the clerk in orders, Mr. Bonney, inadvertently begun prayers with his usual sentence of Scripture, 'I will arise and go to my Father,' &c. This quickly became the subject of much conversation; and an addition was made to it, that the rector preached on the Fifth Commandment, 'Honour thy Father and thy Mother,' &c. which was so positively asserted, that bishop Sherlock could only defend him by

by saying that he must certainly have begun a course of sermons on the commandments, and therefore could not help preaching upon that particular one in its turn. But the truth was, he preached on a quite different text, 'The Lord is good to all,' &c. and the whole sermon was on that subject. The Prince was pleased to shew his lordship several marks of civility and condescension. He had the honour of baptizing all his highness's children, except two; and though he did not attend his court, which was forbidden to all those who went to the King's, yet on every proper occasion he behaved with all the submission and respect due to his illustrious rank. In consequence of this, his influence with the Prince being supposed much greater than it really was, he was sent, by the King's direction, with a message to his royal highness; which not producing the effects expected from it, he had the misfortune to incur his majesty's displeasure; who had been unhappily persuaded to think that he might have done more with the Prince than he did, though indeed he could not. For this reason, and because he sometimes acted with those

who

who opposed the court, the King did not speak to him for a great number of years.

In February 1742-3, a bill was brought into parliament to take off the high duties on spirituous liquors, and to lay on others much lower in their room. As this alteration was thought likely to have a most pernicious effect on the health and morals of the common people, it met with a vigorous opposition in the house of lords, especially from the bench of Bishops, all of whom voted, and several spoke against it. Amongst the latter, were bishop Sherlock and bishop Secker; and when it passed, the bishop of Oxford entered his dissent. Mr. Sandys was then chancellor of the exchequer, and this was considered as his bill; yet soon after, on the death of bishop Hough, he very generously endeavoured, without Dr. Secker's knowledge, to obtain for him the see of Worcester. It was in the course of the same year that his lordship received a letter from Dr. Wishart, provost of Edinburgh College, recommending to him his brother and Mr. Wallace, deputies from the established Clergy of Scotland, to promote a bill

bill in parliament for providing a maintenance for their widows and children, which many of them imagined the bishops would oppose. Dr. Secker paid them all the civility, and did them all the service he could. None of the bench opposed their bill either publicly or privately, and it was moved for by a bishop at each of its three readings in the house of lords.

About the middle of October in the following year, died Sarah, duchess dowager of Marlborough. She was buried at Blenheim, by bishop Secker, whom she had appointed one of her executors. For this choice she could have no other reason than the high opinion she entertained, in common with the rest of the world, of his understanding and integrity; for he never paid the least court to her, either by private adulation, or by accommodating his public conduct to her grace's political sentiments. On his being made bishop of Oxford, she paid him some common civilities of neighbourhood, and desired by lord Cornbury to see him. When he had visited her a few times, she requested him to be one of her executors, and read to him the

clause in her will relating to them, in which she had given each of them £2,000, and indemnified them from any mistakes which they might honestly make. Before he gave his consent, he consulted lord chancellor Hardwicke upon it, who advised him to accept the trust. After this he visited her grace occasionally every winter. She never asked him any questions, nor gave him any hints, about the past or future disposal of his vote in parliament. He always spoke his mind to her very freely, how much soever he differed from hers, and she bore it, for the most part, patiently. He blamed her for leaving so much of her estate to persons not related to her, and particularly for giving any thing to himself, who, he told her, was as rich as her grace. These remonstrances she did not seem to take well, and never said any thing more to him about her will. He therefore concluded that she had struck him out from being one of her executors, but it proved otherwise. She gave each of them an additional £500. None of her money ever came into his lordship's hands to be disposed of by him in her lifetime. But he had good reason to think that

she

she gave away large sums in charity, to the amount of several thousands every year.

Some time after this, the nation began to be alarmed with the appearances of a rebellion. About the middle of February, 1743-4, the King sent a message to both houses of parliament, acquainting them, that the pretender's son was meditating an invasion of this kingdom from the coast of France. The bishop of Oxford took the earliest opportunity, after this declaration, of signalizing his affection to the government, and exciting that of others, by composing a sermon on the occasion, which he preached at St. James's church the 26th of the same month. A motion was soon after made in the house of lords to attaint the pretender's son. It met with some opposition, but was strenuously supported by the friends of the constitution, and amongst others by bishop Secker, who made a spirited speech in its favour. When the rebellion actually broke out in September 1745, he sent immediately a circular letter upon it to his clergy, and drew up and promoted an address from them to the King. On his return to

London in October, he preached the above-mentioned sermon again at his church and both his chapels, with some alterations and improvements, and leaving it to be printed, went down to a county meeting at Oxford, and back again in a few days to St. James's, when he presented his sermon to the King. It was much read and admired, and has been ranked, by the best judges, amongst the first of the many excellent discourses which were published on that occasion*.

In the spring of the year 1748, Mrs. Secker died of the gout in her stomach. She was a woman of great sense and merit, but of a very weak and sickly constitution. They had been married upwards of twenty years, during the greatest part of which time, her extreme bad state of health and spirits had put his affection to the severest trials; by which, instead of being lessened, it seemed to become stronger every day. He attended her in all her long illnesses with the greatest care and tenderness, and was always ready to break off any

* It is now in the volume of sermons printed by himself when bishop of Oxford, in 1758.

engagement,

engagement, any study, provided his company could procure her a moment's ease or cheerfulness.

Not long after this, a bill came into the house of lords, and afterwards passed into an act, by which all letters of orders to Scotch episcopal ministers, not granted by a bishop of the church of England or Ireland, were disallowed from Michaelmas 1748, whether dated before that time or after. This the bishop of Oxford thought a great hardship, and spoke largely against it in the house. He was answered, but with much civility and respect, by lord chancellor Hardwicke, who favoured the bill. In the committee however the majority were against it, of which all the bishops present made part. Bishop Thomas, of Lincoln, also spoke against it upon the report. But there they were outvoted. Dr. Wishart, the provost of Edinburgh College, told his lordship afterwards, that he thought the bill was too hard on the episcopal ministers, and that the bishops had done right.

The part which Dr. Secker took in this affair

affair did him not the least disservice with his friend the lord chancellor, whose sentiments he opposed; and who a little before had made a proposal to him, that if the deanery of St. Paul's became vacant, he should take it in exchange for the rectory of St. James's, and the prebend of Durham. The bishop accepted the offer, but told his lordship he should not remind him of it, which he never did. Notwithstanding that, about two years afterwards, on the nomination of Dr. Butler, dean of St. Paul's, to the see of Durham, lord Hardwicke immediately wrote to the duke of Newcastle, who was then at Hanover with the King, recommending the bishop of Oxford for the deanery. His Majesty consented, and he was installed in December 1750.

It was no wonder that after presiding over so extensive and populous a parish for upwards of seventeen years, bishop Secker should willingly consent to be released from a burthen, which began now to grow too great for his strength. Some of his parishioners too had requited him but ill for the pains he sincerely took to serve them in all respects. But far

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the largest and most creditable part of them were duly sensible of what they owed to him; and most deeply regretted the loss of a pastor, whose character they reverenced, and by whose labours and instructions they had so greatly profited. When he preached his farewell sermon, the whole audience melted into tears. He was followed with the prayers and good wishes of those whom every honest man would be most ambitious to please; and there are numbers still living, who retain a strong and grateful remembrance of his incessant and tender solicitude for their welfare.

Having now more leisure both to prosecute his own studies, and to encourage those of others, he gave Dr. Church considerable assistance, in his first and second Vindication of the Miraculous Powers, &c. against Dr. Middleton, which were published in the years 1750 and 1751; and he was of equal use to him in his Analysis of lord Bolingbroke's Works, which appeared a few years afterwards. About the same time began the late archdeacon Sharpe's controversy with the followers of

of Mr. Hutchinson, which was carried on to the end of the year 1755. The subjects of it were, the meaning of the words *Elohim* and *Berith*, the antiquity of the Hebrew language and character, and the exposition of the word *Cherubim*. These pieces made together three volumes in octavo. Bishop Secker read over all Dr. Sharpe's papers before they went to the press, and corrected and improved them throughout.

But the ease which this change of situation gave him was very soon disturbed by a heavy and unexpected stroke, the loss of his three friends, bishops Butler, Benson, and Berkeley, who were all cut off within the space of one year. Of these eminent men who were thus joined in death, as they had been throughout life, and with whom bishop Secker was most intimately connected from his earliest years, two are so well known to the world by their immortal writings, and the just applause of contemporary authors, that they need no other memorial. But the name of Benson, being written only on the hearts of those that knew him, deserves some further notice in this place.

"He

"* He was educated at the Charter-house, and removed from thence to Christ Church in Oxford, where he had several noble pupils, whose friendship and veneration for him continued to the end of life. His favourite study in early years was the mathematics, in which he was well skilled, and had also an excellent taste for painting, architecture, and the other fine arts. He accompanied the late Earl of Pomfret in his travels, and in Italy became acquainted with Mr. Berkeley, as he did at Paris with Mr. Secker. He was, from his youth to his latest age, the delight of all who knew him. His manner and behaviour were the result of great natural humanity, polished by a thorough knowledge of the world, and the most perfect good breeding, mixed with a dignity, which, on occasions that called for it, no one more properly supported. His piety, though awfully strict, was inexpressibly amiable. It diffused such a sweetness through his temper, and such a benevolence over his

* This account of bishop Benson is given in the words of the late Mrs. Catharine Talbot, who knew him well, and to whom this narrative is indebted for a few other communications of the same nature.

countenance,

countenance, as none who were acquainted with him can ever forget. Bad nerves, bad health, and naturally bad spirits were so totally subdued by it, that he not only seemed, but in reality was, the happiest of men. He looked upon all that the world calls important, its pleasures, its riches, its competitions, with a playful and good-humoured kind of contempt; and could make persons ashamed of their follies, by a raillery that never gave pain to any human being. Of vice he always spoke with severity and detestation, but looked on the vicious with the tenderness of a pitying angel. His turn was highly sociable, and his acquaintance very extensive. Wherever he went, he carried cheerfulness and improvement along with him. As nothing but the interests of christianity and virtue seemed considerable enough to give him any lasting anxiety; so, on the other hand, there was no incident so trifling from which he could not raise amusement and mirth."

It was much against his will that he was appointed bishop of Gloucester, and from that see he would never remove. He was, however, a vigilant and active prelate. He revived the

the very useful institution of rural deans, he augmented several livings, he beautified the church, and greatly improved the palace. It was an act of kindness to his friend which cost him his life. At the request of Dr. Secker he went from Gloucester to Bath to visit bishop Butler, who lay ill at that place, and he found him almost at the point of death. After one day's stay there, he was obliged to go to the northern extremity of his diocese, to confirm. The fatigue of these journeys (for, according to his constant practice, he travelled on horseback) and his business together, produced an inflammation, and that a mortification in his bowels, of which he died. The bishop of Oxford was appointed one of his executors, with a legacy of £300, which he refused to take.

In the beginning of the year 1753, a bill for the naturalization of the Jews, commonly called the Jew bill, had passed both houses of parliament with little or no opposition. But a great clamour being raised against it without doors, it was thought adviseable that the duke of Newcastle should move for the repeal of it, on the first day of the session in next

next winter. And he desiring to be seconded by a bishop, Dr. Secker was fixed on for that purpose. He accordingly rose up after the duke, and made a speech, which had the good fortune to be remarkably well received; though lord Westmorland said, that for some time he thought the bishop had been speaking against the repeal, having advanced more in favour of the bill than he had ever heard before. He spoke afterwards for a clause to disable Jews from being patrons of livings, which some thought they might; but the desire of the house for the simple repeal prevailed, and he was advised not to divide it on the clause. On this occasion it was that he vindicated his friend Dr. Sherlock, with great spirit, against some severe attacks made upon him by a noble lord in relation to this bill; for which generous proceeding he had the bishop's thanks.

During the whole time that he was dean of St. Paul's, he attended divine service constantly in that cathedral twice every day, whether in residence or not; and in concert with the other three residentiaries, established the custom of always preaching their own turns

turns in the afternoon, or exchanging with each other only; which, excepting the case of illness, or extraordinary accidents, was very punctually observed. The fund, appropriated to the repairs of the church, having by neglect and wrong management fallen into much confusion, he took great pains in examining the accounts, reducing payments, making a proper division of expense betwixt the dean and chapter on one side, and the three trustees on the other, and prevailing on the latter to agree to that division; by which means the fund was put on such a footing, that it increased afterwards considerably, and promised to be sufficient for the purposes it was designed to answer. In the following year he was engaged in another very troublesome transaction, making an agreement with the inhabitants of St. Faith's parish, concerning their share of St. Paul's church-yard. And he left behind him a great number of papers relative to both these points. He procured the old writings of the church to be put in order, and an index made to them. He collated a copy of the old statute book, as it is called, with that which is used as the original,

original, and corrected a multitude of mistakes in that transcript. He examined also the registers and books in the chapter-house, extracted out of them what seemed material, and left the extracts in the hands of his successor.

In the summer months he resided constantly at his episcopal house at Cuddesden. The vicinity of that place to the university of Oxford, and the natural connection which his station gave him with the members of that learned body, could not but be very pleasing to a man of his literary turn. Yet his situation, agreeable and honourable as it was to him, had, notwithstanding, its difficulties. To appear with any considerable degree of credit amongst so many men of the first eminence for genius and erudition, and to preserve the reverence due to the character of a diocesan, amidst such violent party-dissensions as at that time unhappily prevailed there, required no small share of ability and prudence. Dr. Secker however had the good fortune to succeed in both those points. His house was the resort of those who were most distinguished for academical merit, and his conversation

such

such as was worthy of his guests, who always left him with a high esteem of his understanding and learning. And though in the warm contest in 1754, for representatives of the county (in which it was scarce possible for any person of eminence to remain neuter) he openly espoused that side which was thought most favourable to the principles of the revolution; yet it was without bitterness or vehemence, without ever departing from the decency of his profession, the dignity of his station, or the charity prescribed by his religion. On the contrary, along with the truest affection to the government (though he was then under the displeasure of the court) he preserved at the same time so much good temper and good will towards the opposite party; took such unwearied pains to soften the violent prejudices conceived against them by the administration; and shewed on all proper occasions so cordial and friendly a concern for the welfare and honour of the whole university; that they, who most disliked his political tenets, could not help acknowledging his candour and moderation. The same prudent conduct in this respect which

which he observed himself, he recommended to his clergy in that memorable passage towards the conclusion of his fifth charge*, which struck the hearers by its novelty and propriety at the time in a very remarkable manner, and is well worthy the serious perusal of all who happen to be in similar circumstances. Indeed the whole series of those excellent charges, which he delivered in the course of his governing that diocese, were listened to by a very learned and critical audience with peculiar marks of attention and regard. The first of them, which contains directions for regulating the studies, the temper, and general conduct of the clergy, was printed soon after it was spoken, and passed through several editions. Having in this considered them as ministers of the gospel at large, in his subsequent charges he proceeded to consider them as ministers of the several parishes in which they officiated; and descended to more particular directions, both with regard to the discharge of their spiritual functions, and also the care of their tempo-

* Page 197.

ralities,

ralities, their incomes, churches, lands, and houses.

But words were not the only persuasives he made use of. He enjoined no duty, he imposed no burthen on those under his jurisdiction, which he had not formerly undergone, or was not still ready, as far as became him, to undergo. He preached constantly in his church at Cuddesden every Sunday morning, and read a lecture on the catechism in the evening (both which he continued to do in Lambeth chapel after he became archbishop); and in every other respect, within his own proper department, was himself that devout, discreet, disinterested, laborious conscientious pastor, which he wished and exhorted every clergyman in his diocese to become.

A conduct like this could not fail of attracting the notice and esteem of all those who wished well to the cause of learning and religion, in whose thoughts he had been long marked out for the highest honours of his profession. He continued notwithstanding in the see of Oxford upwards of twenty years; going on that whole time in the same even course of

 duty,

duty, and enjoying with the highest relish those leisure hours, which his retirement at Cuddesden sometimes afforded him, for the prosecution of his favourite studies. At length however his distinguished merit prevailed over all the political obstacles to his advancement; and placed him, without any efforts or application of his own, in that important station which he had shewn himself so well qualified to adorn. For within a very few days after the death of archbishop Hutton, he received a message from the duke of Newcastle, acquainting him that his grace had proposed him to the King for the vacant see of Canterbury. He returned the duke a short note of thanks, expressing at the same time his wishes that his majesty might fix on a properer person. Soon after this his grace desired an interview with the bishop, at which he informed his lordship that the King had appointed him archbishop. This promotion accordingly took place, and he was confirmed at Bow church, April 21, 1758.

In accepting this high and burthensome station, Dr. Secker acted on that principle which influenced him through life; he sacrificed

ficed his own ease and comfort to considerations of public utility. Apart from this, the mere secular advantages of grandeur were objects below his ambition: were, as he knew and felt, but poor compensations for the anxiety and difficulties attending them. His idea of these things was always the same with that which is expressed in his intended speech to the convocation of 1761: "Non sunt, ex-"perto credite, non sunt tanti vel honores vel "reditus amplissimi ecclesiasticis destinati, ut "a quopiam enixè cupiantur. Multum ha-"bent solicitudinis, non parum forsan invidiæ, "veræ delectationis nihil, nisi quoties occurrit, "occurrit autem raro, insignis benefaciendi "occasio *." These were not mere words of course: they were the genuine sentiments of his heart; his whole conduct bore testimony to the sincerity with which he spoke. He had never once through his whole life asked preferment for himself, nor shewn any unbecoming eagerness for it; and the use he made of his newly acquired dignity very clearly shewed, that rank, and wealth, and power had in no other light any charms for him, than as they

* Oratio Synodalis, p. 368, 369.

they enlarged the sphere of his active and industrious benevolence.

The first thing that engaged his attention was the care of his new diocese, which he immediately visited. And finding that partly the real, and partly the presumed unwholesomeness of some parts of it, had deterred too many from living on their benefices, he made this the first article of his charge, and pressed the necessity of residence upon his clergy, in the strongest, yet most affectionate terms *. But whenever particular circumstances rendered the personal presence of the minister himself clearly impracticable, he then earnestly recommended peculiar care in the choice of a substitute; and so much tenderness and liberality in the provision made for him as might be some compensation for the unhealthiness or disagreeableness of his situation †. Yet as this would, he knew, bear hard on some incumbents, whose small preferments, or narrow circumstances, or numerous families obliged them to obtain help on as easy terms as they well could; in such cases he frequently made an

* First Charge to the Diocese of Canterbury, p. 207—219.

† Ibid. p. 219—222.

an addition himself to the curate's salary, and, as a still further encouragement, rewarded occasionally with preferment, those who had resided long upon their cures, and performed their duty well; especially in unwholesome places.

In little more than two years after his grace's promotion to the see of Canterbury, died the late King George the Second. Of what passed on that occasion, and of the form observed in proclaiming our present most gracious Sovereign (in which the archbishop of course took the lead) his grace has left an account in writing. He did the same with regard to the subsequent ceremonials of marrying and crowning their present Majesties, which in consequence of his station he had the honour to solemnize, and in which he found a great want of proper precedents and directions. He had before, when rector of St. James's, baptized the new king, (who was born in that parish) and he was afterwards called upon to perform the same office for the greatest part of his majesty's children; a remarkable, and perhaps unexampled, concurrence of such incidents in the life of one man.

From the time he was made dean of St. Paul's,

Paul's, his late majesty used to speak to him at his levee occasionally, but with no particular marks of distinction. But after he became archbishop, the King treated him with much kindness, and on one occasion was pleased to assure him very particularly, that he was perfectly satisfied with the whole of his conduct in that station. And surely his majesty, as well as all his people, had good reason to be so. For never did any one support the rank, or discharge the various duties, of a metropolitan, with more true dignity, wisdom and moderation, than archbishop Secker *. He considered himself as the natural guardian, not only of that church over which

* Ecquâ vero in parte spem nostram fefellit? imo vero exsuperavit. Sine offensione partium, sine invidiâ, sine ambitione, ecclesiæ principatum adeptus, sine arrogantiâ cum dignitate verâ sustinuit; magni vir animi, et verè αρχικος, qui politiam ecclesiasticam animo complectebatur, consilio dirigebat, auctoritate tuebatur, exemplo ornabat; in negotiis impiger & indefessus, nihil a se alienum putabat quod ad clericorum jura, mores, famamque pertinebat auctoritate ita usus ut nihil pro libidine aut insolentiâ imperii affectaret, sed omnia ad οικοδομην communesque ecclesiæ utilitates referret. *Johannis Burton ad amicum epistola*, p. 14. Printed at Oxford, in 1768, and sold by Rivington.

which he presided, but of learning, virtue, and religion at large: and, from the eminence on which he was placed, looked round with a watchful eye on every thing that concerned them, embracing readily all fit opportunities to promote their interests, and opposing, as far as he was able, all attempts to injure them.

Men of real genius or extensive knowledge, he sought out and encouraged. Even those of humbler talents, provided their industry was great, and their intentions good, he treated with kindness and condescension. Both sorts he would frequently employ in undertakings, suited to their respective abilities, and rewarded them in ways suited to their respective wants. He assisted them with books, promoted subscriptions to their works, contributed largely to them himself, talked with them on their private concerns, entered warmly into their interests, used his credit for them with the great, gave them preferments of his own. He expended upwards of 300*l.* in arranging and improving the manuscript library at Lambeth. And having observed with concern, that the library of printed books in that palace had received no accessions since the time

time of archbishop Tennison, he made it his business to collect books in all languages from most parts of Europe, at a very great expense, with a view of supplying that chasm; which he accordingly did, by leaving them to the library at his death, and thereby rendered that collection one of the noblest and most useful in the kingdom.

All designs and institutions that tended to advance good morals and true religion he patronized with zeal and generosity. He contributed largely to the maintenance of schools for the poor, to rebuilding or repairing parsonage houses and places of worship, and gave at one time no less than 500*l.* towards erecting a chapel in the parish of Lambeth, to which he afterwards added near 100*l.* more. To the Society for promoting Christian Knowledge he was a liberal benefactor; and to that for propagating the Gospel in Foreign Parts, of which he was the president, he paid much attention; was constant to all the meetings of its members, (even sometimes when his health would ill permit it) and superintended their deliberations with consummate prudence and temper.

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He was sincerely desirous to improve to the utmost that excellent institution, and to diffuse the knowledge and belief of christianity as wide as the revenues of the society, and the extreme difficulty of establishing schools and missions amongst the Indians, and of making any effectual and durable impressions of religion on their uncivilized minds, would admit. But Dr. Mayhew, of Boston in New-England, having in an angry pamphlet accused the society of not sufficiently answering these good purposes, and of departing widely from the spirit of their charter; with many injurious reflections interspersed on the church of England, and the design of appointing bishops in America; his grace on all these accounts thought himself called upon to confute his invectives, which he did in a short anonymous piece, entitled, An Answer to Dr. Mayhew's Observations on the Charter and Conduct of the Society for propagating the Gospel; printed for Rivington, in 1764, and reprinted in America. The strength of argument, as well as fairness and good temper, with which this answer was written, had a

considerable

considerable effect on all impartial men, and even on the doctor himself, who plainly perceived that he had no common adversary to deal with; and could not help acknowledging him to be "a person of excellent sense, and "a happy talent at writing; apparently free "from the sordid illiberal spirit of bigotry; "one of a cool temper, who often shewed "much candour, was well acquainted with the "affairs of the society, and in general a fair "reasoner*." He was therefore so far wrought upon by his "worthy answerer†," as to abate much in his reply of his former warmth and acrimony. But as he still would not allow himself to be "wrong in any material "point‡," nor forbear giving way too much to reproachful language and ludicrous representations, he was again animadverted upon by Mr. Apthorpe, in a sensible tract, entitled, A Review of Dr. Mayhew's Remarks, &c. printed also for Rivington, in 1765. This put an end to the dispute. The doctor on reading

* Mayhew's Remarks on an anonymous Tract, &c. p. 3.

† Ibid. p. 85. ‡ Ibid. p. 87.

reading it declared he should not answer it; and the following year he died.

It appeared evidently in the course of this controversy, that Dr. Mayhew, and probably many other worthy men amongst the dissenters both at home and abroad, had conceived very unreasonable and groundless jealousies of the church of England, and its governors; and had in particular greatly misunderstood the proposal for appointing bishops in some of the colonies. The chief reasons for desiring an establishment of this nature, were, the want of persons vested with proper authority, to administer to the members of the church of England the ancient and useful office of confirmation; to superintend the conduct of the episcopal clergy; and to save candidates for the ministry the trouble, cost, and hazard of coming to England for ordination. It was alleged, that the expense of crossing the Atlantic for that purpose could not be less than 100*l.*; that near a fifth part of those who took that voyage had actually lost their lives; and that, in consequence of these discouragements, one half of the churches

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in several provinces were destitute of clergymen. Common humanity as well as common justice, pleaded strongly for a remedy to these evils; and there appeared to be no other effectual remedy but the appointment of one or more bishops in some of the episcopal colonies. The dangers and inconveniences, which the dissenters seemed to apprehend from that measure, were thought to be effectually guarded against by the mode of appointment which was proposed. What that mode was, may be seen in the following extract from the archbishop's answer to Dr. Mayhew, in which he explains concisely and clearly the only plan for such an establishment that was ever meant to be carried into execution.

"The church of England is, in its constitution, episcopal. It is, in some of the plantations, confessedly the established church; in the rest are many congregations adhering to it; and through the late extension of the British dominions, it is likely that there will be more. All members of every church are, according to the principles of liberty, entitled to every

"part

" part of what they conceive to be the be-
" nefits of it, entire and complete, so far as
" consists with the welfare of civil govern-
" ment. Yet the members of our church in
" America do not thus enjoy its benefits,
" having no protestant bishop within three
" thousand miles of them; a case which never
" had its parallel before in the christian
" world. Therefore it is desired that two
" or more bishops may be appointed for them,
" to reside where his majesty shall think
" most convenient; that they may have no
" concern in the least with any persons who
" do not profess themselves to be of the
" church of England, but may ordain minis-
" ters for such as do; may confirm their
" children when brought to them at a fit age
" for that purpose; and take such oversight
" of the episcopal clergy, as the bishop of
" London's commissaries in those parts have
" been empowered to take, and have taken
" without offence. But it is not desired in
" the least that they should hold courts
" to try matrimonial or testamentary causes;
" or be vested with any authority now ex-
" ercised, either by provincial governors, or
" subordinate

"subordinate magistrates; or infringe or di-
"minish any privileges or liberties, enjoyed
"by any of the laity, even of our own com-
"munion. This is the real and the only
"scheme that hath been planned for bishops
"in America; and whoever hath heard of
"any other, hath been misinformed through
"mistake or design*." And as to the place of their residence, his grace further declares, "that it neither is, nor ever was intended or "desired to fix one in New-England; but "episcopal colonies have always been pro-
"posed †."

The doctor on reading this account confessed‡, that if it were the true one, "he had "been misinformed himself, and knew of "others who had been so in common with "him; and that if such a scheme as this were "carried into execution, and only such con-
"sequences were to follow, as the proposer "had professedly in view, he could not object "against it, except on the same principle "that he should object against the church of "England in general§."

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* Answer to Mayhew, p. 59. † Ib. p. 66.
‡ *Remarks on an anonymous Tract*, &c. p. 59.
§ Ib. p. 79.

As it came however from an unknown writer, he thought himself at liberty to consider it as nothing more than the imaginary scheme of a private man, till it was confirmed by better authority*. It now appears to have come from the best authority, and it is certain that this mode of establishing bishops in America, was not invented merely "to serve a present "turn†," being precisely the same with that proposed by bishop Butler twenty years ago‡, and with that mentioned by his grace, in his letter to the right honourable Horatio Walpole, written when he was bishop of Oxford, and published since his death§ by his executors, Mrs. Catharine Talbot, and Dr. Daniel Burton; in which the whole affair is set in a right point of view, his own sentiments upon it more fully explained, and an answer given to the chief objections against such a proposal.

It is not necessary to enter here into the merits

* *Remarks on an anonymous Tract, &c.* p. 61.

† Ibid.

‡ See APTHORPE's *Review of* DR. MAYHEW's *Remarks*, p. 55.

§ In the year 1769; and sold by Rivington.

merits of this question. It is before the public, and every one is enabled to judge for himself. But thus much, it is presumed, may safely be inferred from the account here given of it (which is the true one); that the mere proposal of such an appointment, or rather the encouragement of what had been long before proposed is not a crime of quite so unpardonable a nature, as the archbishop's adversaries have been pleased to represent it. Posterity will stand amazed when they are told, that on this account his memory has been pursued in pamphlets and newspapers with such unrelenting rancour, such unexampled wantonness of abuse, as he would scarce have deserved, had he attempted to eradicate christianity out of America, and to introduce Mahometanism in its room; whereas, the plain truth is, that all he wished for, was nothing more than what the very best friends to religious freedom ever have wished for, a complete toleration for the church of England in that country. What an idea must it give mankind of his grace's character, to have such a circumstance singled out by his bitterest

bitterest revilers as the most exceptionable part of it *.

But though the archbishop was a sincere and avowed friend to that measure, yet it was by no means the only or the principal object of his concern in regard to the colonies. The advancement of true piety and learning, the conversion of the Indians and negroes, as far as it was practicable, the establishment of proper schools, the distribution of useful books, the good conduct of the missionaries, the preservation of peace and harmony amongst the different religious communities in those parts of the British empire; these things had a very large share in his thoughts, and in the correspondence which he constantly kept up with a few of the ablest and worthiest men in the American

* It is a very remarkable circumstance, and a complete justification of the archbishop's sentiments and conduct on the subject of an American episcopacy, that notwithstanding the violent opposition to that measure when he espoused it, yet no sooner did the American provinces become independent states, than application was made to the English bishops by some of those States, to consecrate bishops for them according to the rites of the church of England. And accordingly three bishops were actually consecrated here some years ago, one for Pennsylvania, another for New York, and a third for Virginia.

American provinces. The letters which he wrote to them, on these and such like subjects, are highly expressive of his pastoral character; and represent in a very pleasing light his truly benevolent disposition, his condescension to persons of the lowest station, his indefatigable application to every affair that came before him, his zeal to promote the interests of religion in general, and the church of England in particular; not by warm and violent counsels, but by methods of tenderness and brotherly kindness towards those who embraced a different interest. Of these things the Americans will ever retain a grateful remembrance; and have in their letters to this country, expressed their sense of his kind attention to them in the strongest and most affectionate terms.

Whenever any publications came to his knowledge that were manifestly calculated to corrupt good morals, or subvert the foundations of christianity, he did his utmost to stop the circulation of them; yet the wretched authors themselves he was so far from wishing to treat with any undue rigour, that he has more than once extended his bounty to them in distress. And when their writings could not

not properly be suppressed (as was too often the case) by lawful authority, he engaged men of abilities to answer them, and rewarded them for their trouble. His attention was every where. Even the falsehoods and misrepresentations of writers in the newspapers on religious or ecclesiastical subjects, he generally took care to have contradicted; and when they seemed likely to injure in any material degree the cause of virtue and religion, or the reputation of eminent and worthy men, he would sometimes take the trouble of answering them himself. One instance of this kind, which does him honour, and deserves mention, was his defence of bishop Butler, who, in a pamphlet, published in the year 1767, was accused of having died a papist. This strange slander, founded on the weakest pretences and most trivial circumstances that can be imagined, no one was better qualified to confute than the archbishop; as well from his long and intimate knowledge of bishop Butler, as from the information given him at the time by those who attended his lordship in his last illness, and were with him when he died. Accordingly, by an article in a newspaper, signed

Misopseudes, his grace challenged the author of that pamphlet to produce his authority for what he had advanced; and in a second article defended the bishop against him; and in a third (all with the same signature) confuted another writer, who, under the name of A real Protestant, still maintained that ridiculous calumny. His antagonists were effectually subdued, and his superiority to them was publicly acknowledged by a sensible and candid man, who signed himself, and who really was, a dissenting minister*. Surely, it is a very unwise piece of policy, in those who profess themselves enemies to popery, to take so much pains to bring the most respectable names within its pale; and to give it the merit of having gained over those who were the brightest ornaments and firmest supports of the protestant cause.

The welfare, the credit, the good influence of the clergy he had entirely at heart, and suffered nothing to escape his notice, that could in any proper way promote them. He earnestly endeavoured to prevent unworthy men from bringing disgrace on the profession, and

* The late Dr. Kippis.

and contempt on religion, by entering into orders. With this view it was that he so strongly recommended the greatest care and caution in signing testimonials. "They are," says he*, "the only ordinary information "that we have in a case of the utmost im- "portance, where we have a right to be in- "formed. For no one can imagine, that we "are to ordain whoever comes, or depend "upon clandestine intelligence. We must "therefore, and do depend on regular testi- "monials, every part of which ought to be "considered before it is given, and no con- "sideration paid to neighbourhood, acquaint- "ance, friendship, compassion, importunity, "when they stand in competition with truth. "It may be sometimes hard for you to refuse "your hand to improper persons; but it is "only one of the many hardships which con- "science bids men undergo resolutely when "they are called to them. It would be much "harder that your bishop should be misled, "the church of God injured, and the poor "wretch himself assisted to invade sacrile- "giously an office, at the thought of which he "hath

* First Charge to the Diocese of Canterbury, p. 222.

"hath cause to tremble*." If any such however had unhappily found means to obtain ordination, he did his utmost to prevent their further progress; or if that could not be done, very openly signified his dislike of their conduct; nor could he ever bring himself to treat them, however considerable their rank might be, with any marks of esteem or respect.

Men of worth and eminence in the church he cherished and befriended, and endeavoured to bring forward into stations where they might be singularly useful. Above all, he distinguished with peculiar marks of his favour, the conscientious and diligent parish priest. He was of opinion, that "the main support of "piety and morals consisted in the parochial "labours of the clergy; and that, if this "country could be preserved from utter pro-"fligateness and ruin, it must be by their "means †." For their assistance therefore in one important branch of their duty, he gave them in his third archiepiscopal charge directions for writing and speaking sermons. The thoughts of such a man, on so nice and difficult

* First Charge to the Diocese of Canterbury, p. 226.
† Ibid. p. 239.

cult a subject, must naturally raise some expectation, and that expectation will not be disappointed. They are the evident result of a sound judgment, matured by long experience and a thorough knowledge of mankind, and are every way worthy of one who was himself so great a master of that species of composition and elocution. It was his purpose, after speaking of stated instructions, to have gone on to occasional ones; but he did not live, as he himself foreboded he should not, to accomplish that design.

The conduct which he observed towards the several divisions and denominations of christians in this kingdom, was such as shewed his way of thinking to be truly liberal and catholic. The proselyting spirit of popery indeed, he thought should always be kept under proper legal restraints. He himself observed its movements with care, and exhorted his clergy to do the same, especially those who were situated in the midst of Roman catholic families; against whose influence they were charged to be upon their guard, and were furnished with proper books, or instructions for that purpose. He took all fit opportunities of com-

bating the errors of the church of Rome in his own writings; and the best answers, which were published to some of the late apologies for its doctrines, were written at his instance, and under his direction. He had the good fortune to preserve some persons of consequence from embracing that communion, and to receive several converts from it, both of the clergy and laity, into the church of England. Yet he never encouraged the smallest degree of persecution or needless severity against the members of the Romish church, which he well knew to be totally opposite to the spirit of the gospel; nor did he consider their number in this kingdom to be so great as to afford any just ground for apprehension or alarm. When the earl of Radnor moved in the house of lords for an inquiry into their numbers, his grace was very active in forwarding that measure. The return for his diocese was no more than 271; that for all the dioceses in England and Wales did not amount to 68,000; which, even when all due allowances were made for unavoidable errors of computation in great towns, more especially in London, fell far short of what by some well-meaning persons

they were supposed or represented to be. And if we further reflect how many wealthy and noble families in these kingdoms have lately embraced the protestant religion, each of which would probably draw after it several other converts of inferior rank, it will appear the better grounded opinion of the two, that popery is rather in a declining than a progressive state amongst us.

Towards his protestant brethren of all persuasions, he demeaned himself with great mildness and moderation. One very striking proof of this occurs in the directions he gives his clergy, with regard to their conduct towards those who are commonly distinguished by the name of Methodists *. It is impossible to read that passage without acknowledging the justness of it, and conceiving the highest opinion of the writer's philanthropy and good sense.

With the dissenters his grace was sincerely desirous of cultivating a good understanding. Though firmly attached to the church of England, and ready on all proper occasions to defend its discipline and doctrines with becoming

* Second Archiepiscopal Charge, p. 280.

becoming spirit; yet it never inspired him with any desire to oppress or aggrieve those of a different way of thinking, or to depart from the principles of religious liberty, by which he constantly regulated his own conduct*, and wished that all others would regulate theirs. He considered the protestant dissenters in general as a conscientious and valuable class of men, and was far from taking the spirit of certain writings to be the spirit of the whole body. With some of the most eminent of them, Watts, Doddridge, Leland, Chandler, Lardner, he maintained an intercourse of friendship or civility; by the most candid and considerate part of them he was highly reverenced and esteemed; and to such amongst them as needed help, shewed no less kindness and liberality than to those of his own communion.

Nor was his concern for the protestant cause confined to his own country. He was well known as the great patron and protector of it

* A strong confirmation of these assertions may be seen in one of his grace's letters to Dr. Lardner, written when he was bishop of Oxford, and preserved in the Memoirs of that learned man, which have been lately published, p. 98.

it in various parts of Europe; from whence he had frequent application for assistance, which never failed of being favourably received. To several foreign protestants he allowed pensions, to others he gave occasional relief, and to some of their universities was an annual benefactor.

There is therefore the utmost reason to believe that he spoke the language of his heart, in relation to these matters, in the conclusion of his answer to Dr. Mayhew, which well deserves to be here laid at full length before the reader.

"Our inclination is to live in friendship "with all the protestant churches. We assist "and protect those on the continent of Eu-"rope as well as we are able. We shew our "regard to that of Scotland as often as we "have an opportunity, and believe the mem-"bers of it are sensible that we do. To those "who differ from us in this part of the king-"dom, we neither attempt nor wish any in-"jury; and we shall gladly give proofs to "every denomination of christians in our "colonies, that we are friends to a toleration "even of the most intolerant, as far as it is

"safe;

" safe; and willing that all mankind should
" possess all the advantages, religious and
" civil, which they can demand either in law
" or reason. But with those who approach
" nearer to us in faith and brotherly love, we
" are desirous to cultivate a freer communi-
" cation, passing over all former disgusts, as
" we beg that they would. If we give them
" any seeming cause of complaint, we hope
" they will signify it in the most amicable
" manner. If they publish it, we hope they
" will preserve fairness and temper. If they
" fail in either, we must bear it with patience,
" but be excused from replying. If any writ-
" ers on our side have been less cool and less
" civil than they ought and designed to have
" been, we are sorry for it, and exhort them
" to change their style if they write again.
" For it is the duty of all men, how much
" soever they differ in opinion, to agree in
" mutual good-will and kind behaviour *."
This passage Dr. Mayhew himself allows † to
be written " in such a candid, sensible, and
" charitable way, as did the author great
" honour,

* Answer to Mayhew, p. 68.

† Mayhew's Remarks on an anonymous Pamphlet, p. 38.

"honour, shewed the amiable spirit of chris-
"tianity, in an advantageous light," and was worthy the pen of a metropolitan, "whose "christian moderation," he acknowledges to be "not the least shining part of his respec-"table character*." And it may on the best grounds be added, that archbishop Secker in this place not only expressed his own real sentiments, but those of the present truly benevolent primate, and of far the greatest part in every rank of the English clergy in general.

In public affairs his grace acted the part of an honest citizen, and a worthy member of the British legislature. From his very first entrance into the house of peers, his parliamentary conduct was uniformly upright and noble. He kept equally clear from the two extremes of factious petulance and servile dependence; never wantonly thwarting administration, from motives of party-zeal, or private pique, or personal attachment, or a passion for popularity; nor yet going every length with every minister, from views of interest or ambition. He admired and loved the

* Mayhew's Remarks on an anonymous Pamphlet, p. 86.

the constitution of his country, and wished to preserve it unaltered and unimpaired. So long as a due regard to this was maintained, he thought it his duty to support the measures of government. But whenever they were evidently inconsistent with the public welfare, he opposed them with freedom and firmness. Yet his opposition was always tempered with the utmost fidelity, respect, and decency, to the excellent prince upon the throne; and the most candid allowances for the unavoidable errors and infirmities even of the very best ministers, and the peculiarly difficult situation of those who govern a free and high-spirited people. He seldom spoke in parliament, except where the interests of religion and virtue seemed to require it; but whenever he did, he spoke with propriety and force, and was heard with attention and respect. Though he never attached himself blindly to any one set of men, yet his chief political connections were with the late duke of Newcastle, and lord chancellor Hardwicke. To these he principally owed his advancement, and he had the good fortune to live long enough to shew his gratitude to them or their descendants, particularly

cularly to the former of them; with whose solicitations though he did not always think it necessary to comply, when that nobleman was at the head of affairs; yet when he was out of power, the archbishop readily embraced every opportunity of obliging him; and gave him so many solid and undeniable proofs of friendship, that the duke always spoke of his grace's behaviour to him in the strongest terms of approbation, and made particular mention of it to some of his friends but a very short time before his own death.

During more than ten years that Dr. Secker enjoyed the see of Canterbury, he resided constantly at his archiepiscopal house at Lambeth; as being not only most commodiously situated for his own studies and employments, but for all those who on various occasions were continually obliged to have recourse to him. These reasons weighed with him so much, that no consideration, not even that of health itself, could ever prevail upon him to quit that place for any length of time. A few months before his death indeed, the dreadful pains he felt, had compelled him to think of trying the

Bath

Bath waters; but that design was stopt by the fatal accident which put an end to his life.

His grace had been for many years subject to the gout, which in the latter part of his life returned with more frequency and violence, and did not go off in a regular manner, but left the parts affected for a long time very weak, and was succeeded by pains in different parts of the body. About a year and a half before he died, after a fit of the gout, he was attacked with a pain in the arm near the shoulder, which having continued about a twelvemonth, a similar pain seized the upper and outer part of the opposite thigh, and the arm soon became easier. This was much more grievous than the former, as it quickly disabled him from walking, and kept him in almost continual torment, except when he was in a reclined position. During this time he had two or three fits of the gout; but neither the gout nor medicines alleviated these pains, which, with a want of exercise, brought him into a general bad habit of body.

On Saturday the 30th of July, 1768, he was seized, as he sat at dinner, with a sickness

at

at his stomach. He recovered himself before night, but the next evening, whilst the physicians were attending, and his servants raising him on his couch, he suddenly cried out that his thigh-bone was broken. The shock was so violent, that the servants perceived the couch to shake under him, and the pain so acute and unexpected, that it overcame the firmness he so remarkably possessed. He lay for some time in great agonies, but when the surgeons arrived, and discovered with certainty that the bone was broken, he was perfectly resigned, and never afterwards asked a question about the event. A fever soon ensued. On Tuesday he became lethargic, and continued so till about five o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, when he expired with great calmness, in the 75th year of his age.

On examination, the thigh-bone was found to be carious about four inches in length, and at nearly the same distance from its head. The disease took its rise from the internal part of the bone, and had so entirely destroyed its substance, that nothing remained at the part where it was broken, but a portion of its outward integument. And even this had many

 perforations,

perforations, one of which was large enough to admit two fingers, and was filled with a fungous substance arising from within the bone. There was no appearance of matter about the caries, and the surrounding parts were in a sound state. It was apparent that the torture which his grace underwent during the gradual corrosion of this bone, must have been inexpressibly great. Out of tenderness to his family he seldom made any complaints to them, but to his physicians he frequently declared his pains were so excruciating that unless some relief could be procured, he thought it would be impossible for human nature to support them long. Yet he bore them for upwards of six months with astonishing patience and fortitude; sat up generally the greater part of the day, admitted his particular friends to see him, mixed with his family at the usual hours, sometimes with his usual cheerfulness; and, except some very slight defects of memory, retained all his faculties and senses in their full vigour till within a few days of his death.

He was buried, pursuant to his own directions, in a covered passage, leading from a private

private door of the palace to the north door of Lambeth church; and he forbade any monument or epitaph to be placed over him.

By his will he appointed the reverend Dr. Daniel Burton, canon of Christ Church, and Mrs. Catharine Talbot above-mentioned, his executors; and left thirteen thousand pounds, in the three per cent. annuities, to Dr. Porteus and Dr. Stinton, his chaplains, in trust; to pay the interest thereof to Mrs. Talbot and her daughter, during their joint lives, or the life of the survivor; and after the decease of both those ladies, then eleven thousand of the said thirteen thousand are to be transferred to the following charitable purposes, viz:

	£.	s.	d.
To the Society for the propagation of the gospel in foreign parts, for the general uses of the society - - - - - - - -	1,000	0	0
To the same Society, towards the establishment of a bishop or bishops in the King's dominions in America - - - - - - -	1,000	0	0
To the Society for promoting christian knowledge - - - - - - - - -	500	0	0
To the Irish protestant working schools - -	500	0	0
To the Corporation for relieving the widows and children of the poor clergy - - - - -	500	0	0
To the Society of the stewards of the said charity - - - - - - - - -	200	0	0

	£.	s.	d.
To Bromley college, in Kent - - - -	500	0	0
To the hospitals of the archbishop of Canterbury, at Croydon, St. John at Canterbury, and St. Nicholas Harbledown, £500 each - -	1,500	0	0
To St. George's and the London hospitals, and the Lying-in hospital in Brownlow-street, £500 each - - - - - - -	1,500	0	0
To the Asylum in the parish of Lambeth -	400	0	0
To the Magdalen hospital, the Lock-hospital, the Small-pox and Inoculation hospital, to each of which his grace was a subscriber, £300 each - - - - - - - -	900	0	0
To the incurables at St. Luke's hospital - -	500	0	0
Towards repairing or rebuilding the houses belonging to poor livings in the diocese of Canterbury - - - - - - - -	2,000	0	0
	£11,000	0	0

Besides these benefactions, he left 1,000*l.* to be distributed amongst his servants; 200*l.* to such indigent persons as he had assisted in his life-time; 5,000*l.* to the two daughters of his nephew Mr. Frost; 500*l.* to Mrs. Secker, widow of his nephew Dr. George Secker; and 200*l.* to Dr. Daniel Burton. After the payment of these, and some other small legacies, he left his real, and the residue of his personal estate, to his nephew Mr. Thomas Frost, of Nottingham.

Out

Out of his private library, he left to the archiepiscopal one at Lambeth all such books as were not there before, which comprehended much the largest and most valuable part of his own collection; and a great number of very learned MSS. written by himself on various subjects, he bequeathed to the manuscript library in the same palace. His lectures on the catechism, his manuscript sermons, &c. he left to be revised and published by his two chaplains, Dr. Stinton and Dr. Porteus. His Options he gave to the archbishop of Canterbury, the bishop of London, and the bishop of Winchester, for the time being, in trust; to be disposed of by them, (as they become vacant) to such persons as they shall in their consciences think it would have been most reasonable and proper for him to have given them, had he been living.

Such were the last bequests of archbishop Secker; of which it is enough to say, that they kept up the noble uniformity of his character to the end, and formed a very proper conclusion to the life of a truly great and good man.

His grace was in his person tall and comely, in the early part of life slender, and rather consumptive;

consumptive; but as he advanced in years, his constitution gained strength, and his size increased, yet never to a degree of corpulency that was disproportionate or troublesome.

The dignity of his form corresponded well with the greatness of his mind, and inspired at all times respect and awe, but peculiarly so when he was engaged in any of the more solemn functions of religion; into which he entered with such devout earnestness and warmth, with so just a consciousness of the place he was in, and the business he was about, as seemed to raise him above himself, and added new life and spirit to the natural gracefulness of his appearance.

His countenance was open, ingenuous, and expressive of every thing right. It varied easily with his spirits and his feelings; so as to be a faithful interpreter of his mind, which was incapable of the least dissimulation. It could speak dejection, and on occasion, anger, very strongly. But when it meant to show pleasure or approbation, it softened into the most gracious smile, and diffused over all his features the most benevolent and reviving complacency that can be imagined.

His

His intellectual abilities were of a much higher class than they who never had any opportunities of conversing intimately with him, and who form their opinion of his talents from the general plainness of his language only, will perhaps be willing to allow. He had a quick apprehension, a clear discernment, a sound judgment, a retentive memory. He possessed that native good sense, which is the grand master-key to every art and science, and makes a man skilful in things he has never learnt, as soon as ever it becomes useful or necessary for him to know them. He composed with great ease and readiness; and in the early part of his life, the letters which he wrote to some of his most intimate friends, were full of imagination, vivacity, and elegance. But when he became a parish-priest, he found the graces of style inconsistent with the purposes of pastoral instruction; and willingly sacrificed the reputation he might easily have acquired as a fine writer, to the less showy qualifications of a useful one. From that time he made it his principal study to set every thing he undertook to treat upon in the clearest point of view; to bring his thoughts

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and his arguments as close together, and to express them in as few and as intelligible words as possible; admitting none but what conveyed some new idea, or were necessary to throw new light on the subject, and never wasting his own time or that of others by stepping out of his way for needless embellishments. But though in general he thus confined himself to the severe laws of didactic composition, yet he could be, where the occasion called for it, pathetic, animated, nervous; could rise into that true sublime, which consists not in pomp of diction, but grandeur of sentiment, expressed with simplicity and strength; of which his sermons afford several admirable specimens.

It seldom happens that men of a studious turn acquire any degree of reputation for their knowledge of business. That love of solitude and contemplation which generally attends true genius, and is necessary for any considerable exertion of it, gives at the same time a certain indolence and softness to the mind, which equally indisposes and unfits it for taking a part in the busy scenes of life. But Dr. Secker's talents were formed no less for action

than

than speculation; nor was he more embarrassed with difficulties in the most intricate affairs, than in the deepest studies. In all the several stations that he passed through, he let nothing suffer for want of attention and care. Wherever his advice and assistance were called for, he never failed to be present, was scrupulously punctual to his appointments, shewed himself a perfect master of the business that came before him, and went through it with calmness and dispatch. And it is very observable, that though in all important transactions, no one had greater ideas, or proceeded on more enlarged and liberal principles; yet where it was necessary, he could take notice of the smallest and seemingly most trifling circumstances, and enter into the minutest details with a penetration and exactness, which are seldom seen even in those who are most practised in worldly concerns.

His learning was very extensive, and on those points, which he studied with any degree of attention, profound. He was well acquainted with the Greek and Latin languages; had in the younger part of his life read with taste the best authors in each; and of the latter

latter more especially had imbibed so strong a tincture, that when he was near seventy, after a disuse of above forty years, he composed the Latin speech printed at the end of his charges; the style of which is nervous, manly, and correct.

He possessed a large share of critical penetration, and scarce ever read any book of note without making remarks upon it. Some of these still remain amongst his manuscripts. Some he communicated at different times to the editors or translators of several classic authors. But his chief labours of this kind were bestowed on the holy Scriptures, for which he came well prepared by his knowledge of the original languages in which they were written. In Hebrew literature more especially, his skill was so well known and acknowledged, that few works of eminence in that branch of learning were published, without being first submitted to his examination, and receiving considerable improvement from his corrections*.

He

* The archbishop's claim to the very highest distinction in Hebrew literature and criticism, the reader will see established beyond all controversy in the Letter addressed to the lord bishop of Worcester. "Of all the Hebrew

He was the first promoter, and always a liberal encourager, of that very useful work, the Collation of the Hebrew Manuscripts of the Old Testament, undertaken by Dr. Kennicott, and now brought to a conclusion. The greatest part of his leisure hours was employed in studying the original text of the sacred writings; in comparing it with all the ancient versions; in collecting together the remarks made upon it by the most ingenious and learned authors, ancient and modern, Jewish and Christian; in applying to the same purpose every thing he accidentally met with in the course of his reading, that had any tendency to explain and illustrate it; and superadding to the whole, his own observations and conjectures, some of which have been since confirmed by the best manuscripts. The result of these labours appears, in some degree, in the short and masterly explications of Scripture, interspersed occasionally in his lectures and sermons; but more particularly in the interleaved Bibles, and

Hebrew critics I ever consulted (says the learned author of that letter,) and I have consulted the most eminent ancient and modern, ARCHBISHOP SECKER appears to me to be the most sagacious, the most accurate, and the most profound."—p. 29. 2d edit.

the

the theological dissertations hereafter mentioned.

But his attention was not solely confined to the Scriptures. He had studied carefully some of the best christian writers of the primitive ages, and without relying implicitly on their judgment, or adopting their errors, knew well how to avail himself of their real excellences. Of ecclesiastical history he was a great master; had a clear idea of the progress of christianity from its first promulgation to the present times, of the various revolutions it had passed through, the different grounds on which it had been opposed or vindicated, the steps by which the corruptions of it had been gradually introduced, the arts by which they had been so long maintained, and the providential coincidence of events which afterwards contributed to remove them. He was well acquainted with the various sects, into which the church was anciently, and is at present divided; he understood the nature and tendency of their respective tenets, the state of the controversies subsisting amongst them, the respective merits of their best writers, the proper conduct to be observed towards each, and the good uses

that

that might be made of all. And though in his writings he never made a needless ostentation of all this learning, yet they who examine some of the plainest of them closely and critically, will find them to be the result of deep thought and a comprehensive knowledge of his subject; will find that he expresses himself on almost every point with propriety, precision, and certainty; without any thing crude or injudicious, without any of those rash assertions and hasty conclusions, to which they, who have but a superficial view of things, and know not what ground they stand upon, are perpetually exposed.

The best modern publications in most parts of useful learning, but more especially those which immediately related to his own profession, or were in any degree connected with it, he constantly read; was one of the first to give a satisfactory account of them, to commend them if they deserved it, to point out and obviate their errors, if they contained any which he thought material. But there was one part of his literary character extremely amiable, and, in the degree at least, almost peculiar to him; and that was, the incredible pains he would take in revising, correcting, and

to read so much, and to leave behind him so many writings; some of them learned and critical; all of them full of good sense and useful knowledge. The fact is, that in him were united two things which very rarely meet together, but, when they do, can produce wonders, strong parts, and unwearied industry. He rose at six the whole year round, and had often spent a busy day, before others began to enjoy it. His whole time was marked out and appropriated in the most regular manner to particular employments, and he never suffered even those broken portions of it, which are seldom much regarded, to be idly thrown away. The strength of his constitution happily kept pace with the constitution of his mind, and enabled him to go on incessantly from one business to another with almost unremitted application, till, his spirits being quite exhausted, he was obliged at last to have recourse to rest, which however he always took care to make as short as possible.

Industry like this, continued through a long course of years, could not possibly be the effect of any thing but that which was indeed at the bottom of it, a strong sense of duty. It was not because the archbishop had less

relish

relish for ease, or less dislike to fatigue than other men, that his diligence and perseverance so far exceeded theirs; but because he thought himself bound to labour for the glory of God and the good of mankind, and that all indolence and self-indulgence, which interfered with these great objects, was in some degree criminal. Whenever therefore he was engaged (as he was almost continually) in serving others, he never reckoned his own time or pains for any thing, nor did it seem so much as once to enter into his thoughts, that he ought to allow himself any amusement. Even the pleasures of polite literature, which were highly grateful to him, he thought himself obliged to relinquish for the peculiar studies of his profession, and these again for the practical duties of religion, and the daily offices of common life. On this principle he made it a point to be at all times accessible. Even in those early hours, which were more peculiarly dedicated to retirement and study, if any one came to him on the smallest pretence of business, he would instantly break off the most pleasing or most abstruse speculations, receive his visitors with perfect good humour, and sacrifice

those precious moments to duty, to civility, to the slightest propriety, which he would on no account have given up to relaxation or repose.

This indeed was only one instance, among many others, of that wonderful command he had obtained over his most favourite inclinations, and the facility with which he controlled his strongest passions. His temper was naturally quick and impatient; but by keeping a watchful eye over the movements of his own mind, and prescribing to himself certain excellent rules and precautions to which he inviolably adhered, he so totally subdued this dangerous propensity, that few who knew him had any suspicion of his being subject to it. Sometimes indeed, on very trying occasions, he might be seen ready to kindle on a sudden into some expressions of anger, and as suddenly recollecting and checking himself: keeping down the rising tumult within him, and resuming almost instantaneously his usual mildness and composure.

In him appeared all the efficacy of religious principle, the calmness, the greatness of mind, the fortitude, the cheerfulness, which no other principle

principle could inspire, support, and improve through a whole life. That fervent yet rational piety, which glowed in his writings, which animated his devotions, was the genuine effusion of his soul, the supreme guide and director of his actions and designs. It was not, as is sometimes the case, assumed occasionally, and laid aside when the eye of the world was not upon him; but was the same in private as in public, to those who observed him at a distance, and those who lived and conversed intimately with him, who had opportunities of seeing him at all hours, and under all circumstances, in his retired and serious as well as in his freest and most cheerful moments. The honour of God, and the interests of religion, were evidently nearest his heart. He thought of them, he talked of them, he was concerned and anxious for them, he sought out for opportunities of advancing them, he was careful not to say or do any thing that might hurt them in the estimation of mankind. This it was which kept up that uniform decency and propriety so remarkable in his whole deportment, which preserved him from every unbecoming levity of behaviour and conversation,

an air of ease and generosity, without any affectation of magnificence or show. His house was hospitable, and his table plentiful, yet plain and simple. He wished to have every thing suitable to his rank, but would consent to nothing beyond it. He thought it right in one of his station and profession to discountenance as far as he could, all luxurious elegancies. He would therefore never give into several fashionable accommodations, nor admit extraordinary delicacies to his table, nor even accept them when offered to him. He received his company with politeness and good humour, and entertained them, when he was in health and spirits, with lively and improving conversation. He could make pertinent observations on almost any topic that happened to be started, how remote soever from the natural course of his studies. Men of eminent worth or learning he distinguished by peculiar notice, led the discourse to such subjects as called out their respective excellencies, and shewed that they spoke before one who could judge well of their merits.

Yet it must be owned that he was not always equally affable and obliging. There was

 sometimes

sometimes a reserve and coldness in his manner, that threw a damp on conversation, and prevented strangers from being perfectly at their ease before him. This was by some imputed to pride. But in reality it arose from very different causes: sometimes from bodily pain, which he often felt when he did not own it; sometimes from his spirits being wasted or depressed by the fatigues of the morning; sometimes from accidental uneasinesses arising in the course of business, which he could not immediately shake off his mind. To this should be added, that the natural loftiness of his figure, and the opinion generally and justly entertained of his learning and sanctity of life, were of themselves apt to produce a kind of awe and constraint in his company, when he was far from wishing to inspire it.

It was remarkable that he chose always rather to talk of things than persons; was very sparing in giving his opinion of characters, very candid when he did. Of his own good deeds or great attainments he never spoke, nor loved to hear others speak. Compliments were very irksome to him. They visibly put him out of humour, and gave him actual pain; and

and he would sometimes express his dislike of them in such plain terms, as effectually prevented a repetition of them from the same person.

To his domestics he was a gentle and indulgent master. Many of them he suffered to continue with their families in his house after they were married. None of them were discharged on account of sickness or infirmity, but were assisted with the best advice that could be had at a great yearly expense. Those who had attended him in illness, or served him long and faithfully, he never failed to reward with an unsparing hand. Towards his other dependants, his behaviour was even and friendly. He expected every one about him to do their duty, of which he himself first set them the example; and, provided they did so with any tolerable care, they were secure of his favour. Of slight faults he took no notice; of great ones he would express his sense at the time strongly; but never suffered them to dwell or rankle on his mind, or operate to the future prejudice of those whose general conduct was right. To his relations he was continually doing the best-natured, the handsomest,

somest, the most generous things; assisting them in difficulties, comforting them in affliction, promoting their interest, and improving their circumstances reasonably, not aggrandizing or enriching them invidiously.

The unaltered kindness he shewed to the two ladies that lived with him from the time of his marriage to that of his death, that is, for upwards of two-and-forty years, was a remarkable instance of steady friendship; and shewed that his soul was no less formed for that rare union of virtuous minds, than for every other generous affection. The younger of those two ladies, Mrs. Catharine Talbot, (who, to the finest imagination and the most elegant accomplishments of her sex, added the gentlest manners, and a disposition thoroughly benevolent and devout) did not long survive the archbishop. She died on the 9th of January last, in the 49th year of her age.

Thus much it has been judged requisite to lay before the world in relation to archbishop Secker; not with any view of exalting his character higher than it deserves, which is quite needless; but of making its real value more generally known, and of rescuing it from the misrepre-

misrepresentations of a few misinformed or malevolent men. To some, no doubt, the portrait here drawn of him will appear a very flattering one; but it will be much easier to call than to prove it such. Nothing has been advanced but what is founded on the most authentic evidence, nor has any circumstance been designedly strained beyond the truth. And if his grace did really live and act in such a manner that the most faithful delineation of his conduct must necessarily have the air of a panegyric, the fault is not in the copy, but in the original.

After this plain representation of facts therefore, it cannot be thought necessary to enter here into a particular examination of the various falsehoods, which his grace's enemies have so industriously circulated, in order to fix, if possible, some stain upon his reputation. It would be very unreasonable to expect that he of all others, so high in rank and so active in the discharge of his duty, should, amidst the present rage of defamation, escape without his full share of censure; and it would be very weak to apprehend the least ill consequences from it. There is so little doubt

from

from what quarter those invectives come, and to what causes they are owing, that they do not appear to have made the slightest impression on any unprejudiced mind, and, for want of ground to support them, are sinking hourly into oblivion. If a life spent like archbishop Secker's, and a spirit such as breathes through every page of his writings, are not a sufficient confutation of all such idle calumnies, it is vain to think that any thing else can be so. All that his friends have to do, is to wait a little while with patience and temper. Time never fails to do ample justice to such characters as his; which, if left to themselves, will always rise by their own force above the utmost efforts made to depress them, and acquire fresh lustre every day in the eyes of all considerate and dispassionate men*.

Lambeth, 1770.

* The experience of near forty years which have now elapsed since the archbishop's death, has amply confirmed the truth of this prediction. 1806.

EARNEST EXHORTATION

TO THE

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

OF

GOOD-FRIDAY:

IN A

LETTER

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF LAMBETH PARISH.

FIRST PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1776.

* This little Tract has been for many years in the Catalogue of *The Society for promoting Christian Knowledge.*

AN

EARNEST EXHORTATION*,

&c.

My very good Friends and Parishioners,

THE little regard that has for some years past been paid in several parts of this kingdom to that holy day, which we distinguish by the name of *Good-Friday*, has given great concern to many serious persons, and has more than once drawn severe animadversions on the church of England and its governors in the public papers. But these censures (like most others which come through such channels) are very unjustly applied. The blame rests not on the clergy. The church requires a very solemn observance of the day; its ministers set the example of doing their duty, but they are followed by much smaller numbers of

of their people than might naturally be expected. It is true, were the primitive discipline restored, which some have with no little vehemence demanded, it might possibly remedy this evil. But they who are most clamorous for the revival of that discipline, would perhaps be the first to complain of it, and to represent the remedy as worse than the disease. It is certain, at least, that these are not the times for any extraordinary exertions of power either civil or ecclesiastical; and although something might perhaps be done in the present case by the judicious interposition of lawful authority, yet it is from the more persuasive methods of admonition, exhortation, and example, that we must chiefly expect any material change for the better. Sincerely desirous of contributing all in my power towards so good a work, I could not forbear addressing myself to you, my brethren, on this subject; not because the neglect of Good-Friday is more observable here than elsewhere, but because it is with you I am more particularly concerned, and because I can truly say, that your welfare, both temporal and spiritual, is, and ever has been, since I

first

first came amongst you, an object which I have had sincerely at heart. It is with pleasure I observe that my labours have not been wholly unsuccessful; and that your own good dispositions, assisted by divine grace, have in many instances effectually seconded my weak endeavours for your service. Your attendance, particularly, on public worship, is, in general, exemplary, and your behaviour in it serious and devout. It were greatly to be wished that the same deep sense of religion, which seems to inspire you on the Lord's Day, should also forcibly impress your minds on Good-Friday. For although there is, I believe, full as much attention paid to that day in this parish as in any other, yet there is in all, I fear, much less than there ought to be. If on that anniversary of our Lord's crucifixion, a stranger were to arrive in the capital or its neighbourhood, from a remote part of the world, he could not have the least imagination that it was set apart by authority as a day of public fasting, humiliation, and prayer; and that it was originally distinguished by an event more astonishing in its nature, and more important in its consequences to the whole race of mankind, than any that had ever happened from the creation of the

 world

world to this moment: an event which shook the whole frame of nature, which rent the rocks, caused the earth to quake, and the graves to open and give back their dead*. Of all this he would scarce be able to discover any traces or memorials among us. He would see every kind of trade and traffic going on as usual; the streets crowded with people, the roads lined with carriages and travellers, the fields full of labourers, and the same face of business and bustle, the same air of gaiety and dissipation as at any other time. Here and there indeed, he might perhaps perceive a few pious people resorting to church. He might also perchance discover a solitary shop or two, half open and half shut up, as if the owner was half heathen and half christian; as if he had some little misgivings of mind that he was doing wrong, and yet could not for his life summon up courage and religion enough to do what is right: so he goes stumbling on between both, halting, like the Jews before him, between two opinions†, and trying hard to serve two masters, God and Mammon‡, at the same time.

To

* Matt. xxvii. 51, 52.

† 1 Kings xviii. 21. ‡ Matt. vi. 24.

To see the generality of people thus perfectly inattentive to the duties of that day, when the eternal Son of God hung agonizing on the cross for their sakes, must surely excite in every pious mind the most painful and melancholy reflections. To what cause shall we ascribe this strange insensibility, this want of all tender feeling and all grateful sentiment for the greatest and most substantial act of kindness that ever was conferred on any human being? It must be owing undoubtedly to one of these two causes: either to a total disbelief of the christian revelation; or else merely to the want of attending properly to the inestimable advantages we derive from the sufferings and death of Christ. With the first of these causes I have at present no concern. It is not to infidels I am now addressing myself, but to christians; under which denomination I am willing to believe that the whole of this parish may be comprehended. You have not yet, I hope, profited so much by your vicinity to the metropolis, as to have imported all those wretched productions of modern philosophy, which in various shapes and sizes,

under the name of essays, letters, novels, histories, from the bulky quarto down to the meager pamphlet, are every day scattering the seeds of irreligion on the other side of the Thames. You have not, I am persuaded, advanced near so far as this in the fashionable refinements of this polished age. Your principles are still uncorrupted; your faith in the gospel is still firm and unshaken; but you have not perhaps sufficiently reflected on the nature and value of that redemption, which Christ purchased for you on the cross; and consequently think but lightly of the day which is meant to commemorate that unspeakable act of mercy. To correct this error therefore, and to inspire you with just notions of your duty in this respect, I shall, in as concise and as clear a manner as I can, explain to you the reason and the effect of those sufferings which our Redeemer was graciously pleased, on our account, to undergo upon the cross; from whence the propriety of observing the day intended to commemorate them will clearly appear.

We all know and feel that we are weak, corrupt, and sinful creatures. We find in ourselves

selves such a natural and innate propensity to what is wrong, and such a backwardness and indisposition, in many instances, to do what is right, that we cannot but conclude (what Scripture assures us is true) that the human frame has undergone some great shock, and contracted some very fatal disorder, since it first came out of the hands of its wise and benevolent Author. We perceive ourselves incapable of pleasing a God of infinite purity and holiness, without some further help than nature can give us, and without greater indulgences than we have any title to expect. Every thinking man must be sensible, that after all his endeavours, and the very utmost he can do, he is still not only an unprofitable, but too often an ungrateful and disobedient servant. His passions frequently hurry him into the most heinous crimes, and these sometimes grow into habits, which he finds it extremely difficult to subdue. Or if by some uncommon effort he does rescue himself from this slavery, yet how shall he wash away the stain that sin has left in his soul? How shall he appease the anger and regain the favour

of

of his offended Maker? "By repenting," you will perhaps say, "and amending his "life." This is undoubtedly the best thing he can do, and what every sinner is bound to do. But there is no reason to believe that repentance and reformation *alone* will be sufficient to avert the punishment due to past transgressions. Repenting is only being sorry for what has been done amiss. But that does not *undo* it; it does not put us in the same state as if we had never done it. Reformation of life is doing right for the future; but that can no more make amends for having acted wrong before, than forbearing to contract new debts can pay off the old. It is indeed *probable* that repentance and amendment will be accepted favourably by our Maker; but the sinner has no good ground, either from reason or experience, to think that they will be sufficient to obtain pardon, much less reward, without something else to assist and act in conjunction with them. He sees every day, that the bitterest sorrow, and the sincerest reformation, will not restore the credit, the fortune, the health, the strength, that

that his vices have destroyed; and why then should he suppose that they will save him from punishment in the next world, when they cannot do it even in this? The natural apprehensions of mankind are repugnant to such an idea. The heathens themselves never imagined that repentance and reformation were an adequate atonement for sin. They made use of animal sacrifices to appease their offended gods; an expedient of so singular, so unpleasant, and so expensive a nature, that they would never have had recourse to it, had they not thought such an expiation absolutely necessary; had they not been persuaded, that after all they could do themselves, something must be done or suffered by some other being, before they could be restored to the condition they were in before they forfeited their innocence. What reason, then, can we have to think otherwise? The goodness of God does indeed give us ground to hope that he will some way or other shew mercy to his wretched creatures; but his justice and his holiness give equal cause to think that he will assert his authority, and support his laws, by the punishment of those who transgress them.

How

How then shall we reconcile these two seemingly inconsistent expectations? What mode of treatment can we suppose it possible for the Almighty to adopt towards the human race, which shall at once manifest his abhorrence of sin, and his tenderness for the sinner, shall release offenders from that heavy punishment which their disobedience merits, without exposing his authority to contempt, or giving others encouragement to hope that they may insult his laws with impunity? Nothing less than infinite wisdom could strike out an expedient like this; and infinite wisdom did accordingly devise the following gracious method of giving salvation to mankind. At the properest time for such an interposition, God thought fit to send his own Son into the world, who took our nature upon him; and after teaching a most pure and holy religion, of which his own life was a perfect example, he voluntarily submitted to a cruel and ignominious death upon the cross; which our Maker was pleased to consider as an atonement and satisfaction made to his justice for the sins of all mankind, and to accept it in lieu of that punishment which they had justly incurred at his

his hands. Thus "did mercy and justice meet together, righteousness and peace did kiss each other*." For the sake of that spotless sacrifice offered up for us by Christ our High-Priest (to which the union of his divine nature with the human gave unspeakable value) God has promised to bestow on all who, in proportion to their means of knowledge, believe in his blessed Son, and, repenting of their past faults, endeavour faithfully to obey him, pardon, grace, and everlasting life.

This is that most important doctrine of atonement, which is the basis of all our hopes, the chief corner-stone of the whole christian system, the great leading principle which runs through all the sacred writings, and animates and ennobles almost every part of our liturgy†. If you ask, what authority there is for ascribing so much efficacy to the death of Christ;

* Psalm lxxxv. 10.

† Especially the Communion Office, which is entirely founded on this doctrine as here explained; and the following prayer more particularly expresses it in so fine a strain of true christian piety, that I could not forbear transcribing and recommending it to the reader's notice, as comprehending in a short compass the sense both of Scripture

Christ; I answer, the very highest—the plain, express, and positive declarations of holy writ, such as it is impossible, without violating all the common rules of interpretation, to wrest to any other meaning. "Search the Scriptures," yourselves, I beseech you, and see whether these things are not so. See whether they do not

Scripture and of our church on this great article of our faith.

"O Lord and heavenly Father, we thy humble servants "entirely desire thy fatherly goodness mercifully to ac- "cept this our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving; "most humbly beseeching thee to grant that by the "merits and death of thy Son Jesus Christ, and through "faith in his blood, we and all thy whole church may "obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of "his passion. And here we offer and present unto thee, "O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a rea- "sonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee; humbly "beseeching thee, that all we who are partakers of this "holy communion, may be fulfilled with thy grace and "heavenly benediction. And although we be unworthy, "through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sa- "crifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden "duty and service, not weighing our merits, but par- "doning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; "by whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy "Ghost, all honour and glory be unto thee, O Father "Almighty, world without end." [*Collect after receiving.*]

not tell you that "Christ was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisements of our peace were upon him, and that by his stripes we are healed. *(a)* That the Lord laid on him the iniquities of us all. *(b)* That for our transgressions he was stricken, *(c)* and his soul made an offering for sin." *(d)* This is the language of the prophets many hundred years before our Saviour came into the world; which shews that his death was neither accidental, nor merely the natural consequence of his boldness in reproving the reigning vices of the age, but was *predetermined* long before, and was *intended* to be a propitiatory sacrifice, a vicarious punishment for the sins of all mankind. In perfect consonance with this idea, the sacred writers of the New Testament tell us, that "the Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many. *(e)* That he is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. *(f)* That God set him forth to be

(a) Isaiah liii. 5. *(b)* Isaiah liii. 6.
(c) Isaiah liii. 8. *(d)* Isaiah liii. 10.
(e) Matt. xxi. 28. *(f)* John i. 29.

be a propitiation through faith in his blood. *(g)* Christ hath loved us, says St. Paul, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God. *(h)* Now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. *(i)* He was once offered to bear the sins of many. *(k)* He hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. *(l)* He gave himself a ransom for all, *(m)* that he might redeem us from all iniquity." *(n)* And the whole New Testament declares, that we are "redeemed by him, purchased and bought with the price of his blood." *(o)*

These, my brethren, are the words of Scripture; and if words have any meaning at all, these can mean nothing else, than that Christ came into the world *on purpose* to suffer death upon the cross for our redemption, and that he made there a "full, perfect, and sufficient "sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for the "sins

(g) Romans iii. 25. *(h)* Ephes. v. 2.
(i) Heb. ix. 28. *(k)* Heb. ix. 28.
(l) 1 Pet. iii. 18. *(m)* 1 Tim. ii. 6.
(n) Titus ii. 14. *(o)* Acts xx. 28; 1 Cor. vi. 20; 1 Pet. i. 18, 19; 2 Pet. ii. 1; Rev. v. 9.

"sins of the whole world*." This I am sure is the sense, in which every plain man must understand the passages above quoted: and if this sense can, by any ingenious device of criticism, be conveyed away, and a totally different one slipped into its place, it would, I apprehend, be no difficult matter, by the very same dexterity of interpretation, to explain away the truth of every doctrine, and the obligation of every precept that is to be found in the gospel.

If such then are the benefits we derive from the death of our blessed Lord: if in his blood our guilt is washed away; if through his merits, not our own (on the conditions of repentance, faith, and amendment) we obtain the remission of our sins and the inheritance of everlasting life; consider, I beseech you, what kind of return such invaluable mercies demand; consider, whether that very day, on which these mercies were conveyed to you, ought in reason, in justice, in gratitude, in common decency, to be treated in the manner it too commonly is. "I speak as to wise men, judge ye what I say†," and determine for

* Prayer of Consecration in the Communion Office.

† 1 Cor. x. 15.

yourselves.

yourselves. "Greater love," you must allow, "hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*." Suppose then for a moment, that some friend of your own had actually done this for you; that, when your life was forfeited by some crime against the state, he had voluntarily substituted himself in your place, and suffered the punishment incurred by your offence; what would be your feelings, what would be your behaviour on this occasion? Would you suffer the annual return of that day on which your friend died for you, to pass unheeded, undistinguished, unhallowed by a single tear or sigh, by a single reflection on that most transcendent act of kindness, to which you owed your very existence? There is not a man among you that would not think himself injured and insulted by such a suspicion. Yet this supposed act of kindness (great as it undoubtedly is) falls far below what you have actually experienced from the love of your Redeemer. It was not when you were his *friends*, but when you were his *enemies*†, that he sacrificed his life for you. "For God commendeth his love towards us, in that while we

* John xv. 13. † Romans v. 10.

we were *sinners*, Christ died for us*." We believe, or profess to believe, that this is true; and yet what is our behaviour in consequence of it? Why on the anniversary of the day when it is supposed to have happened, too many of us, alas! are as easy and unconcerned, as much devoted to business or to pleasure, as if nothing in the world had happened with which we had the least concern! Is this right, is this fitting? is it christian-like, is it decent, is it creditable? Does it shew that veneration, love, and gratitude, which malefactors reprieved from death are wont to testify towards their benefactor and deliverer?

"How then," you will perhaps say, "would "you have us observe this day?" In the manner certainly prescribed by the church; and in which it used *anciently* to be observed? with as much seriousness, solemnity, and devotion; with as absolute a cessation of all worldly business and pleasure, as usually takes place on Sunday. In this manner you celebrate Christmas-day, and why then not Good-Friday? On the former of these your Redeemer was born, on the latter he was put to death; and is his crucifixion,

* Romans v. 8.

crucifixion, do you think, of less consequence to you than his nativity? Is it not, on the contrary, to the former of these events that the latter owes the greater part of its value? That he "who thought it not robbery to be equal with God*, who was the very brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person†," should voluntarily divest himself of this splendour, and take upon him, not only the nature of man, but the form of a servant; was, it must be owned, a most surprising instance of condescension and kindness; but that he should moreover, for our sakes, submit to the cruellest injuries and indignities, to the most ignominious and excruciating death; that he should consent "to bear our griefs and carry our sorrows‡," is surely a still stronger and more extraordinary proof of his love and affection for mankind, and therefore certainly demands at least an equal degree of veneration and thankfulness.

There is indeed one difference between the two days in question, which may in some measure possibly account for the different regard which is shewn to them. The nativity of

* Phil. ii. 6. † Heb. i. 3. ‡ Is. iii. 4.

of our Lord is a festival, the crucifixion is a fast, and we find ourselves perhaps much better disposed to rejoice than to weep, to indulge our appetites than to restrain them. If this be really the case with any of us; if we are capable of being withheld from our duty by such low, such mean, such sensual motives as these, it is, I am sure, high time to extricate ourselves from this unworthy thraldom, to break loose from the dominion of sense, "to keep our body under, and bring it into subjection*," and put ourselves under the direction of higher and better principles.

"Could ye not watch with me one hour†?" said our Saviour to his drowsy disciples: "Can "ye not fast for me one day in the year?" may he now say to you. It is true, indeed, mere abstinence from food, whether total or partial, is in itself no virtue, nor can it atone for the breach of any moral duty; and to suppose that it can, is a dangerous and delusive superstition. But, on the other hand, to neglect it absolutely, and deride it as a useless and ridiculous custom, is presumptuous and rash‡.

Fasting

* 1 Cor. ix. 27. † Matt. xxvi. 40.

‡ See the nature, uses, and abuses of religious abstinence,

Fasting is a very proper mark of internal sorrow and contrition. It is only making use of a more emphatical kind of language to speak our sentiments; it is expressing them by actions instead of words. By inflicting this voluntary punishment on ourselves, we plainly acknowledge that we are offenders, and that we take shame and grief to ourselves for the faults we have committed. The mortification of one of our strongest appetites is a very significant way of saying, that we resolve to repent and to subdue "those lusts which war against the soul*." For this conflict we shall be better prepared by such previous exercises of our strength; and a superiority established over our desires in one instance facilitates it in all the rest. Add to this, that the more we abstain from sensual indulgences, the better are we disposed for spiritual meditations. The body when overloaded with luxurious food "presseth down the soul, and weigheth down the mind that museth on many things†." For these

nence, stated and explained by archbishop Secker, with that accuracy, judgment, moderation, and good sense, which so strongly mark the writings of that incomparable prelate.—Secker's Sermons, vol. 5. S. 14. p. 395.

* 1 Pet. ii. 11. † Wisdom ix. 15.

these reasons, fasting has, in almost all ages and nations of the world, being considered as a very proper act of religious discipline. Among the Jews it was very common, and on several solemn occasions was required by their law. But being at length abused, like many other externals of their religion, to the purposes of hypocrisy and superstition, our Saviour severely reproved their ostentatious austerities; and, lest his disciples should be led to imitate them, did not give them any direct command to fast. Yet to those who voluntarily adopted this custom from good intentions, he prescribed rules for conducting themselves properly, and promised them a reward*. He himself fasted forty days and forty nights. These things plainly shew that he approved the practice, and that it was the abuses of it only which he condemned. The Church of England does so likewise, and observes the same prudent moderation in this as in many other instances. It neither gives encouragement to idleness and dissipation, by too great a number of festivals, nor oppresses its members by a load of needless and superstitious

* Matt. vi. 16. 18.

stitious austerities. It recommends with great propriety some degree of self-denial during the season of Lent; and were that injunction better complied with than it seems to be, it would be found, I believe, highly conducive both to health of body and tranquillity of mind. But it leaves the observance of it to every man's own discretion, and inflicts no penalty for neglecting it. The fast on which the primitive church seems to have laid the greatest stress, and which till of late years has been usually observed with great seriousness, is that of Good-Friday. And surely, if ever any restraint on our appetites and pleasures can be proper, if ever it can be a reasonable duty to "turn to the Lord with weeping, fasting, and praying*," and to bewail our sins with every inward sentiment, and every outward expression of the deepest humiliation and contrition, it must be on that day, when to deliver us from the power and the punishment of those sins, Christ Jesus offered himself up as a sacrifice on the cross; when "he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him

* Commination in the office for Ash Wednesday.

him which died for them, and rose again*." It would certainly be decent, and probably useful too, to make some little sacrifice of our common indulgences on Good-Friday to him, who then made so great a one for us. They who cannot wholly omit their usual refreshments may at least delay them a little, or partake of them more sparingly. This, one would think, must be consistent with the tenderest constitution and most delicate health. But if it should in any case be found otherwise, "God will have mercy and not sacrifice†." Judge for yourselves in this particular: judge fairly in your own case, and charitably in that of others. "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth‡. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost‖." Fasting was intended to disengage the mind from sensual objects, to weaken the passions, to spiritualize the affections, to exalt and enliven devotion. If it does not answer these purposes; if, on the contrary,

* 2 Cor. v. 15.
† Matt. ix. 13.
‡ Rom. xiv. 3.
‖ Rom. xiv. 17.

contrary, it be found to render us languid and faint, peevish and morose; if it blunts the edge and deadens the spirit of our religious exercises; it is no longer a duty to practise it; it becomes a duty to omit it.

But they who are incapable of complying with the injunctions of the church in this respect, are certainly able, and ought to be doubly careful, to conform to them in all others. If men cannot fast, they can pray; if they cannot abstain from their ordinary food, they can abstain at least from their ordinary labours, cares, and amusements; they can put this world and its concerns out of their minds, and give themselves up to God; they can attend divine service both parts of the day; they can dedicate the remainder of it to private meditation and prayer; they can examine into their past and present conduct; they can possess themselves with a just sense of their own natural weakness and depravity; of the infinite need they have of a mediator, a redeemer, a propitiation for their sins; they can adore the goodness of God in providing, the goodness of Christ in consenting to become, the very sacrifice they so much wanted,

the

the "Lamb slain" to expiate their guilt, to restore them to the favour of God, and render their best services acceptable in his sight.—For let them, let all the world know and acknowledge with the deepest humility and gratitude, "that not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy God saved us*; and that it is by grace we are saved through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God†."

It is indeed principally for the sake of imprinting this most important truth strongly and powerfully upon your souls, so as to render it a constant and effectual principle of action, that I so much press upon you a due attention to the day which is particularly calculated to bring it home to your thoughts. Were it even, as some contend, nothing more than a mere speculative doctrine; yet as it is, without dispute, the great distinguishing character of the christian dispensation, the wall of partition between natural and revealed religion, the main foundation of all our hopes of pardon and acceptance hereafter, it would surely demand a most

* Titus iii. 5. † Ephes. ii. 8.

a most serious regard from us*. But in fact it is far from being a matter of belief only; it has a direct and natural tendency to influence our practice; and they who reject it, or explain it away to nothing, do not seem to be aware that they are destroying one of the most efficacious motives to right conduct. For what can more clearly prove to us the odious nature of sin, and inspire us with a greater horror and detestation of it, than the consideration, that nothing less than the blood of the Son of God himself could wash away the stains of it; and that, without this, not even the sincerest repentance and completest reformation that we are capable of, would be a sufficient satisfaction to the violated laws and offended Majesty of Heaven? What an awful idea does this give us both of the severity and the goodness of God! of that severity to guilt, which becomes the righteous Governor of the universe;

* This is the doctrine (says the excellent bishop Sherlock) which, together with the principles on which it is founded, and the consequences naturally flowing from it, distinguishes the christian religion from all other religions whatever.

Sermons, vol. iv. d. 3. p. 88.

verse; of that goodness to the criminal, which so well suits and so plainly speaks the gracious Father of mankind? What infinite cause have we to be careful of offending so kind, yet so exact a judge, "and to tremble at his justice, "even whilst we are within the arms of his "mercy?" What encouragement does it afford us to put out all our strength, and strain every nerve in the performance of our duty, when we know, that, though after all "we are unprofitable servants*," yet, unprofitable as we are, we shall be accepted for the sake of our Redeemer's sufferings! that our want of merit will be amply supplied by his merit; and our numberless failings and imperfections lost in the plenitude of his all-sufficient righteousness! How powerfully, in fine, must it constrain us to every instance of duty and affection, both to our Maker and our Redeemer, when we call to mind those wonderful marks of love displayed towards us by both in the great work of our salvation! Perhaps we cannot see all the reasons that made it necessary for Christ to die, that the world might live; but this at least we are sure of, that if Christ

* Luke xvii. 10.

Christ did really die, that the world might live, we are bound to him in the strictest bonds of gratitude and affection*. That the eternal Son of God should put himself in our stead, and interpose his own body as a living shield between our guilt and his Father's wrath, is such a stupendous instance of friendship, as is not to be paralleled in the history of mankind. —"Lord! what is man, that thou art thus mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him†!" "And what is the natural "effect of such kindness as this, but to bind "us to God and our Saviour by the tie of "reciprocal affection, and draw us to our duty "by the cords of tenderness and gratitude? "Surely, if we are not utterly lost to all that "is modest and ingenuous, tender and appre-"hensive in human nature, it will be impos-"sible for us to dote on those sins which were "the cause of our Saviour's sufferings, the "thorns that gored his temples, the nails "that pierced his hands and feet; it will be "impossible for us to resist those endearing "instances of our Saviour's love, which carry "warmth and fervour enough with them to "melt

* Sherlock. † Psalm viii. 4.

"melt the most obdurate nature into thank-
"fulness and obedience*."

You see then, my brethren, how many weighty reasons there are for a religious observance of Good-Friday. It is a decent compliance with the ordinances of the church; it is an open declaration, that you believe that most essential article of christian faith, the redemption of mankind by the death of Christ Jesus on the cross; it is a becoming mark of thankfulness and gratitude for so invaluable a mercy; it affords a very proper opportunity of reviewing your past life; of confessing and lamenting the many sins and follies you perceive in it with the utmost sorrow and humiliation of soul; of entreating pardon through the merits of your Redeemer; and of pleading those merits before God in the holy sacrament of the Lord's supper; which being intended to commemorate the sufferings of Christ, can never be more properly received than on the very day when those sufferings are supposed to have happened. A devout use of the prayers, which you will find in the office for that solemnity,

* Scott's Christian Life, ch. 7. sect. 5. p. 137.

solemnity, cannot fail to impress upon your souls a deep sense of the goodness both of God and of Christ in the great work of your redemption, a sincere contrition for your past offences, and a firm resolution to be more careful of your future conduct.

It is on these grounds, it is from a real persuasion that the cross of Christ is the power of God unto salvation, and that far from being ashamed of it, you ought to glory in it, as the grand source of all your comfort here and all your happiness hereafter; it is, I say, from motives such as these, that I have been induced to address you on this occasion. Hitherto, I am willing to persuade myself, my exhortations have had some weight with you. Let them not lose it, I entreat you, in the present instance. Let me have the satisfaction of observing the good effects of them at the approaching holy season, and of seeing you the first among your neighbours to revive the ancient religious veneration paid to the crucifixion of our blessed Lord. Let your church be crowded on that day, both in the morning and the afternoon. Let your shops

be shut up as on Sundays and on Christmas-day. Let your behaviour during the rest of the day be serious and devout*. Above all things, take care to shew your gratitude for your redemption, not only with your lips, but in your lives. In particular, let the mercies you have received from your Maker and your Redeemer incline you to every act of mercy, forgiveness, and forbearance towards your fellow-creatures. This argument is stated by St. John, with his usual elegant brevity and simplicity: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another†."—An inference so plain, so forcible, so affecting, it is impossible for any ingenuous mind to resist. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering‡. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and

* By the blessing of God on this little Tract, the devout observance of Good-Friday here recommended, was actually produced. On the very next return of that day, the shops were all shut up, the churches were crowded, and the utmost seriousness and decorum took place throughout the cities of London and Westminster and their environs.

† 1 John iv. 11. ‡ Col. iii. 12.

and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you*."

That by this heavenly temper, and the practice of every other christian virtue, you may finally obtain, through faith in your Redeemer, the gift of everlasting life, is the fervent prayer of

Your very sincere friend,
and faithful servant,
B. PORTEUS.

LAMBETH,
March 1*st*, 1776.

* Ephes. iv. 31, 32.

A LETTER

A

LETTER

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF MANCHESTER, MACCLESFIELD,

AND THE ADJACENT PARTS,

ON OCCASION OF

THE LATE EARTHQUAKE

IN THOSE PLACES.

THE TENTH EDITION.

FIRST PRINTED IN THE YEAR 1777.

A

LETTER

TO THE

INHABITANTS OF MANCHESTER,

&c.

My Friends and Brethren,

THE great dangers to which you have been so lately exposed, and which you have so providentially escaped, are of too important a nature, for me, who stand to you in the near relation of diocesan, to pass over in total silence. Notwithstanding the recent date of that relation, I could not resist so powerful a call upon me to discharge my own duty and remind you of yours. The occasion, I hope, will justify me. It is in my apprehension a very serious one. A few weeks since, I am persuaded, you yourselves thought so, whatever may be your opinion now. The first impressions which the earthquake made upon

 you,

you, were, it seems, sufficiently strong; but by this time, perhaps, they may (in some of you at least) be entirely effaced, and you may be going on in the very same unremitted round of business or of pleasure, as if nothing in the world extraordinary had ever happened to you. If this be the case, it is but the more necessary that I should bring back this awakening incident to your thoughts again, and endeavour to imprint a due sense of it upon your minds. The admonitions you have had are not, believe me, to be treated as common, trivial things. When the Almighty speaks in such tremendous language, he must not speak in vain.

There may indeed possibly be some who will take pains to persuade you that the Deity has no concern in events of this sort; that they are the result of chance, or the effects of natural causes, which have no dependence upon him; that the moment he made the world he gave up all care about it, and though the earth be shaken to its very centre, he either sees it not, or sees it with perfect indifference and unconcern. I am not in a humour to waste the time that is destined to better and higher purposes in combating such extravagancies

travagancies as these; nor will I pay so bad a compliment, either to your understandings, or your feelings, as to suppose you capable of listening to them. When your first terrifying alarm was over, and gave place to sober and cool reflection, to what did this naturally lead your thoughts? Did it not immediately direct them to the great Governor of the world? Were not your eyes and your hands (I may safely add your hearts too) almost involuntarily raised up to him, as having just given a most awful display of his almighty power? Let the sceptic, if he pleases, call this superstition. A name, I hope, will not frighten you, especially one so much abused and misapplied as this has lately been. If you part with every thing which such persons are pleased to call superstition, you will very soon be eased, not only of all superstition, but of all religion too, for with them these are synonymous terms. Trust then (for you safely may) to the first movements of your hearts on this occasion. They were the sentiments of nature. They are worth a thousand metaphysical subtilties, and are confirmed by reason, Scripture, and experience.

 What

What the immediate causes of earthquakes are, I shall not here stay to inquire. Notwithstanding several plausible and ingenious theories concerning them, these disorders of our globe, like many diseases of our bodies, do still, in a great measure, remain among the mysteries of nature, and that for a very obvious reason; because we can neither look into the bowels of the earth, nor of the human frame. But whatever these causes may be, they must still be referred to the great First Cause and Author of all. Those laws of nature, as they are called, which he has himself established, must be still under his overruling influence and control: and could they be for one moment interrupted, or suspended, without his knowledge or permission, he would be no longer the sovereign of the universe. Even those things which appear to us the most contingent and fortuitous, and which we therefore call *accidents*, are all under the direction of Supreme Intelligence. "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord *."

Nor is this all; as he is not only the preserver

* Prov. xvi. 33.

server of the material, but the governor also of the moral world, it is highly reasonable to suppose, that he may render the former subservient to the great purposes of the latter; and since he evidently designed the regular course and order of nature for the support and comfort of man, we seem authorized to conclude that he will apply its irregularities and disorders to his punishment, correction, and admonition. This idea of his moral administration is abundantly confirmed by Scripture. It represents him as exercising a supreme and uncontrolled dominion over all the several parts of the material system, and making use of them as ministers to execute his will. The sun, the moon, and all the other celestial bodies, have their stations appointed, and their motions regulated by him*. "He makes the former and the latter rains to descend, and His clouds to drop fatness on the earth †." "He shuts up the sea with doors, and says, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed ‡." "The thunder

* See Deut. iv. 19. Ps. civ. 19.
† Jer. v. 24. Ps. lxv. 11.
‡ Job xxxviii. 8. 11.

thunder is his voice, and the lightning he dispatches as his messenger to the ends of the earth*." The sword, the pestilence, and famine, are all instruments of his displeasure†. "Fire and hail, snow and vapours, wind and storm, fulfil his word‡." All these things he "causes to come, whether for correction or for mercy§." And "when these judgments of his are in the earth," we are expressly told, that he expects "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness‖." Surely then such convulsions of the globe as you have felt, must be amongst the means he makes use of for the same important purposes; and he, without whose knowledge not a sparrow falls to the ground¶, will not suffer "those pillars of the earth, which he himself bears up," to be shaken**, and the inhabitants of it to be filled with terror and consternation, but for great and weighty reasons.

Let me not however be understood to infer from hence, that, because the earthquake was principally

* Job. xxxvii. 5. 3.
† 2 Sam. xxiv. 13.
‡ Ps. cxlviii. 8.
§ Job xxxviii. 13.
‖ Is. xxvi. 9.
¶ Matt. x. 29.
** Ps. lxxv. 3.

principally felt in your towns and neighbourhood, you are therefore more wicked than the rest of your countrymen; such a conclusion would be equally rash and unchristian. We are told, that even those "upon whom the tower in Siloam fell*," were not sinners above all others. But we are all of us, God knows, sinners great enough to stand in need of frequent warnings and corrections; and whether your present situation may not peculiarly require such dreadful monitors as you have lately had, it behoves you very seriously to consider. By the flourishing state of your trade and manufactures, you have for many years been advancing rapidly in wealth and population. Your towns are every day growing in size and splendour; many of the higher ranks among you live in no small degree of opulence; their inferiors, in ease and plenty. What the usual fruits of such affluence as this are, is but too well known. Intemperance and licentiousness of manners, a wanton and foolish extravagance in dress, in equipage, in houses, in furniture, in entertainments; a passion for luxurious indulgences and frivolous amusements;

* Luke xiii. 4.

ments; a gay, thoughtless indifference about a future life, and every thing connected with it; a neglect of divine worship, a profanation of the day peculiarly set apart for it, and perhaps, to crown all, a disbelief and contempt of the gospel; these are the vices and the follies which riches too often engender, and which, I am sorry to add, they have with a fatal profusion disseminated over this kingdom. What proportion of these may have fallen to your share, I have hitherto had no opportunity of knowing; and it would therefore be as unjust, as I am sure it would be painful, for me to become your accuser. Let me rather, with the sincerity of a friend, and the tenderness of a guardian over you, entreat you to be your own judges in this important question. You have had a loud call to recollection. "Judge therefore, yourselves, brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord*." Examine your own hearts thoroughly, look well, extremely well, if there be any way of wickedness in you, that if there be, you may turn from it into the way everlasting†. It is possible, that notwithstanding

* Exhortation in the Communion Service.

† Ps. cxxxix. 24.

standing the unhappy state of our national morals, you may have escaped the general contagion, may have been able to separate the advantages of wealth from its dangers and temptations, and to enjoy the one without being corrupted by the other. Should this appear to be the case, you have been highly favoured of Heaven indeed, and have reason to thank God most devoutly for so rare a felicity. In general, however, it is certain, that the cautions so often given to God's peculiar people, are but too necessary for every other people in similar circumstances: "Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his statutes which I command thee this day. Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; and when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God; and thou say in thine heart, my power and the might of my hand hath gotten me this wealth*."

But admitting, what I hope may very safely be

* Deut. viii. 11, 12, 13, 14, 17.

be admitted, that you cannot be justly charged with such impiety as this, that you are not wholly insensible who it is that "gives you power both to get wealth" and to enjoy it*; has your conduct been in other respects such as the gospel requires? Have you not only kept clear of "presumptuous sins," but distinguished yourselves by every christian grace? Too many are apt to content themselves with a negative, a neutral kind of religion, and think they are in the high road to salvation, if they are guilty of no flagrant and enormous crimes. But deceive not yourselves, I beseech you, with such vain imaginations as these. Christianity not only requires exemption from vice, but sentiments of piety, and habits of virtue. It requires you not only "to put off the old man, but to put on the new†;" Not only "to eschew evil, but to do good‡." It marks out a large circle of positive duties for you to move in, and requires activity, vigilance, vigour, and perseverance, in the discharge of them. As the foundation of all, it expects faith in God, and in the redemption wrought by Christ; not merely an historical,

* Deut. viii. 18. † Ephes. iv. 22. 24. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 11.

historical, speculative, ineffectual faith, but a lively, vital, practical belief, productive of good works. Have you then brought forth these evangelical fruits in any tolerable degree? Have you been christians not only in word, but in deed, and in truth? Have you not merely "confessed with your mouth the Lord Jesus, but believed with your heart unto righteousness*?" In obedience to the first and great command, have you loved the Lord your God with all your heart and soul, and mind, and strength†? Have you constantly prayed to him in private, and worshipped him in public? Have you sacredly observed that holy day which is consecrated to his service, and never prostituted it, or any part of it, to the purposes of business or pleasure, of luxury or indolence? Has your worship been not merely that of the lips, but of the heart, "in spirit and in truth;" and how were your thoughts employed at that very moment when the ground shook beneath you, and the walls of your churches trembled around you?

If you have preserved a due sense of piety in

* Rom. x. 9. † Mark xii. 30.

in your own minds, have you endeavoured to transfuse it into those of your children, your servants, your manufacturers? Their souls, as well as their bodies, are to a great degree, in your hands. Have you been faithful to this trust, and consulted equally the welfare of both? Have you more especially given your children, not merely a *learned*, a *prudent*, a *worldly* education, but (what is of infinitely more importance both to your happiness and theirs, and yet is now most dreadfully neglected) a *moral* and a *religious* one? Have you made them early acquainted with their Maker and their Redeemer; and explained to them the connection they have with another world? Is it on that world you have taught them to fix their hearts and affections, and have you been more anxious to instruct them in the means of securing an inheritance there, than in the arts of amassing wealth, and acquiring distinction here? What is it that has been principal in your intentions, and the ruling passion of your souls? For what purpose have you "risen early and taken rest late, and eat the bread of carefulness*?" Has it been solely to

* Ps. cxxvii. 2.

to extend your trade, to accumulate fortunes, to multiply houses and villas, and to join field to field; or have you carried your views still farther, and entertained ideas of a far more noble and exalted nature? Have you opened a communication, and established a *commerce*, with those remote regions that lie beyond the grave, and made it your chief business to lay up treasures there, which no accidents can diminish, no prodigal heir can dissipate, or convert into instruments of his own destruction? Have you in all your various concerns, both at home and abroad, conducted yourselves on the strictest principles of justice and integrity, uprightness and fair dealing; and if God has blessed your honest labours with success, have you paid, with cheerfulness and liberality, that tribute of beneficence which he requires at your hands for the relief and comfort of your necessitous brethren?

These, my brethren, are all christian duties; they constitute the very life and soul of religion, and if in these you have been materially deficient, you have reason to thank God for exciting you in the manner he has done, to a

juster

juster sense, and a more exact performance of them. And you have the more reason to thank him, because in the "midst of judgment he has remembered mercy," because he "quickly turned his anger away, and would not suffer his *whole* displeasure to arise *." Had he permitted the shocks you felt to have continued a few minutes longer, you might have been involved in the same destruction which some years ago overwhelmed the unhappy city of Lisbon, and a great part of its inhabitants.—Compare your own deliverance with that dreadful catastrophe, and then forbear if you can, to bless God from the bottom of your souls, for chastising and admonishing you with so gentle a hand?—"As a man chasteneth his son, so has the Lord chastened you (not to consume, but only) to humble and prove you, and to do you good at your latter end †." "His anger endureth but a *moment*, and in his favour is life‡." "In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord §." Let not this kindness,

* Ps. lxxviii. 38.
† Deut. viii. 2. 5.
‡ Ps. xxx. 5.
§ Is. liv. 8.

kindness, I beseech you, be lost upon you. Your first terrors and apprehensions would gradually die away, and the little temporary reformation which they might possibly produce at the time, would vanish with them. But if the warmest sentiments of gratitude for your preservation do not remain deeply impressed upon your souls, and produce the most salutary effects on your hearts and lives, you will shew yourselves to be utterly unworthy of the mercies you have received, and can have no reason to expect a repetition of them on any future occasion. If this forbearance of God is despised, and this lenity abused, he may think it necessary to visit you with severer judgments. Take then the best, the only rational method to avert his future displeasure. Recommend yourselves to his favour, not merely by a sudden, transient fit of devotion, the abortive offspring of fear, but by a sincere and fervent, and heart-felt piety; by consecrating the rest of your lives to the service of your Maker; by offering up yourselves, soul and body, as a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto him; "by doing justly,

justly, loving mercy, and keeping yourselves unspotted from the world *."

To all this let me entreat you to add moreover, that much-neglected practice of family prayer. It is at all times a duty of high rank and importance; and in your present circumstances, after the admonitions you have so lately received, you cannot but perceive a peculiar propriety in it. You have seen, you have felt, with a force superior to all reasoning, that you are continually exposed to dangers and accidents which no human prudence can foresee or prevent; and that you stand in daily and hourly need of some superior aid, without which the very ground you stand upon, firm and sure as it seems to be, may sink from under your feet, and overwhelm you and your possessions, the painful fruit of all your care and toil, in one common grave. You cannot then surely think it too much trouble, or too much waste of time, to spend a few minutes every day, not only in private but *with your whole house*, in endeavouring to secure, by frequent and fervent prayer, the constant

* Micah vi. 8.—James i. 27.

constant superintendence of a gracious Providence over you. It is greatly to your credit that as your towns have been enlarged and improved, your churches have also multiplied in the same proportion. In this you have shewn a very proper regard for the honour of God, and the decent celebration of divine worship. Go a little further still in the demonstrations of your piety, and let every one of you make his *own house* "a house of prayer*," a temple fit for the Holy One to inhabit. It will cost you but little to do this. It will require no additional ornament to your dwellings, save those of a devout heart and a virtuous life. "And who then shall harm you, if you be thus followers of that which is good†?" I do not say that no misfortune will then ever befal you. For even the most righteous of men must expect to taste sometimes the bitter cup of affliction. But you will have the very best security against the evils of life, and if they do overtake you, the best support under them that either this world or the next can give. You will be under the immediate inspection and care of that Almighty Being, who

* Is. lvi. 7. † 1 Pet. iii. 13.

who has the whole creation at his command; "who measures the waters in the hollow of his hand, and metes out the heavens with a span, and comprehends the dust of the earth in a measure, and weighs the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance, and takes up the isles as a very little thing*." A Being such as this can never want the power, and we know well, that he never wants the will, to protect those that trust in him; from whom he will either avert every great and extraordinary disaster, or make it conduce ultimately to their good. If infidelity and irreligion have any more solid comforts to offer you than these, they will deserve some attention. But if in the hand of God only you can think yourselves safe, if in the promises of the gospel alone you find that sovereign remedy which composes all your fears, and gives rest to your souls, you can no longer doubt what course you have to take. Your first business is, to render yourselves worthy (by a holy life and reliance on the merits of your Redeemer) of the divine protection; your next, to repose upon it with boundless confidence, and perfect tranquillity; "casting

* Isa. xl. 12. 15.

"casting all your care upon God, because he careth for you*." Then may you say, even under the most alarming apprehensions—"God is our hope and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, will we not fear, *though the earth be moved*, and though the hills be carried into the midst of the sea. The Lord is our light, and our salvation, whom then shall we fear? the Lord is the strength of our life, of whom then shall we be afraid †?"

To His gracious protection I earnestly recommend you, and remain

Your affectionate brother,
and servant in Christ,
B. CHESTER.

October 10, 1777.

* 1 Pet. v. 7. † Ps. xlvi. 1, 2. xxvii. 1.

AN

ESSAY

TOWARDS

A PLAN FOR THE MORE EFFECTUAL

Civilization and Conversion

OF THE

NEGRO SLAVES,

ON THE

TRUST ESTATE IN BARBADOES,

BELONGING TO THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE GOSPEL IN FOREIGN PARTS.

FIRST WRITTEN IN THE YEAR 1784, AND ADDRESSED TO THE SOCIETY; AND NOW CONSIDERABLY ALTERED, CORRECTED, AND ABRIDGED.

AN

ESSAY,

&c.

For some time past the situation of the Negro Slaves in the British West-India islands has been a subject of much discussion, and excited a large share of public attention. The general treatment of these slaves, and the measures that have been taken for their instruction in the principles of morality and religion, have been made distinct heads of official inquiry: and in consequence of this inquiry, it seems to be a very prevailing opinion, that some improvements may and ought to be made in the condition of the Negroes, both temporal and spiritual. It is an opinion no less prevalent, that such improvements can

no where originate with so much propriety as from this venerable society. Every one indeed must see, that nothing can be more suitable to the character of a religious body, than to take the lead in so pious and benevolent a work as that of attempting to introduce into the West-India islands a better system of managing, instructing, and proselyting the Negro slaves. And, most fortunately for the interests of humanity and religion, it so happens that we are possessed of the means of doing this in the best and most effectual manner.

It should seem as if Providence had almost for this very purpose thrown into our hands, as trustees, a plantation stocked with a considerable number of Negroes. In any other view, such a trust must be frequently distressing to our feelings. But considered in the light of affording us materials for our compassion, our charity, our zeal, our piety to work upon, and for shewing to the whole world what great things may be done by the joint operation of these principles, both in advancing the present comfort and the future salvation of the Negroes, and that too, without

the least injury to the interests of the planter; in this light, I say, the possession of an estate so circumstanced, must be considered as one of the happiest events that could befal us.

Here then we shall have an opportunity of realizing for the benefit of mankind, as well as for our own, what now only exists in theory; and of carrying into actual execution all those humane and pious designs which will so properly take their rise from this venerable society, but which the rest of the world may be disposed to think visionary and chimerical. And this undertaking will be easier also to *us* than to any others, because we have already made considerable advances in it by that kind attention which we have always paid to the proper treatment and instruction of our Negroes. This society (as I have fully stated in another place) has repeatedly and earnestly enjoined their managers and agents in Barbadoes to treat their slaves with lenity and tenderness. They have for many years maintained a catechist in orders on the plantation, whose sole business it is to train up the Negroes in the principles of religion, and to perform divine service for their benefit on the

Lord's

Lord's day. And that the slaves may have leisure to attend this and other religious duties, the society has very humanely given them the afternoon of Saturday for cultivating their own land, and attending to their own family affairs. Yet notwithstanding these, and other wise and benevolent regulations, it is but too evident, both from the letters of our catechists, as well as from other undoubted testimony, that the endeavours used to civilize and to christianize our Negroes have not been attended with the desired success. Though many of them have undergone the ceremony of baptism, and when they choose it, attend divine service, yet we have no reason to believe, that they are any thing more than mere nominal christians. No effectual impressions of religion seem to have been made on their minds, nor any material change produced in their principles, dispositions, and habits of life *.

To

* A very worthy member of this society (Mr. Braithwaite) in his evidence before the Privy Council, March 13, 1788, says "the catechist (on the society's estate) has, as far as I am informed, had but little success in improving the morals or principles of the Negroes, though they have been, I believe, baptized."

To what, then, has this failure in our hopes been owing? Most certainly not to that, which some of our catechists have alleged, an impossibility in the nature of the thing itself, an absolute incapacity in the minds of the Africans to receive, or comprehend, or retain religious truths. This is a position which can never be admitted. The christian religion was undoubtedly intended by its Divine Author for an universal one. It was not meant to be confined to any certain climate, to any particular degree of understanding, conformation of features, or shade of complexion. We are expressly commanded to preach the gospel *to every creature*; and therefore every human creature must necessarily be capable of receiving it. It may be true, perhaps, that the generality of the Negro slaves are extremely dull of apprehension, and slow of understanding; but it may be doubted whether they are more so than some of the lowest classes of our own people; at least they are certainly not inferior in capacity to the Greenlanders, many of whom have been made very sincere christians. Several travellers of good credit speak in very favourable terms, both

of

of the understandings and dispositions of the native Africans on the coast of Guinea; and it is a well-known fact, that many even of the Negro slaves in our islands, although labouring under disadvantages and discouragements, that might well depress and stupefy even the best understandings, yet give sufficient proofs of great quickness of parts and facility in learning. They have, in particular, a natural turn to the mechanical arts, in which several of them shew much ingenuity, and arrive at no small degree of perfection. Some have discovered marks of a genius for music, poetry, and other liberal accomplishments; and there are not wanting instances among them of a strength of understanding, and a generosity, dignity, and heroism of mind, which would have done honour to the most cultivated European*. It is not, therefore, to any natural or unconquerable disability in the subject we had to work upon, that the little success of our efforts is to be ascribed. This would indeed be an insuperable obstacle, and must put

* See more particularly the history of a most extraordinary Negro, Job Ben. Salomon, Prince of Bunda, in Africa. *Histoire Generale des Voyages, &c. par M. Prevost*, vol. iii. p. 109.

put an effectual stop to all future attempts of the same nature; but as this is far from being the case, we must look for other causes of our disappointment; which may perhaps appear to be, though of a serious, yet less formidable nature, and such as it is in the power of human industry and perseverance, with the blessing of Providence, to remove. The principal of them, it is conceived, are these which here follow:

1. Although several of our ministers and catechists in the college of Barbadoes have been men of great worth and piety, and good intentions, yet in general they do not appear (if we may judge from their letters to the Board) to have possessed that peculiar sort of talents and qualifications, that facility and address in conveying religious truths, that unconquerable activity, patience, and perseverance, which the instruction of dull and uncultivated minds requires, and which we sometimes see so eminently and so successfully displayed in the missionaries of other churches. And indeed the task of instructing and converting near three hundred Negro slaves, and of educating their children in the principles of morality

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and religion, is too laborious for any one person to execute well; especially when the stipend is too small to animate his industry, and excite his zeal.

2. There seems also to have been a want of *other* modes of instruction, and of *other* books and tracts for that purpose, besides those made use of hitherto by our catechists. And there is reason moreover to believe, that the time allotted for the instruction of the Negroes has not been sufficient.

3. Another impediment to the progress of our slaves in christian knowledge has been their too frequent intercourse with the Negroes of the neighbouring plantations, and the accession of fresh slaves to our own, either hired from other estates, or imported from Africa. These are so many constant temptations in their way to revert to their former heathenish principles and savage manners, to which they have always a strong natural propensity; and when this propensity is continually inflamed by the solicitations of their unconverted brethren, or the arrival of new companions from the coast of Guinea, it frequently becomes very difficult to be resisted, and counteracts,

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in a great degree, all the influence and exhortations of their religious teachers.

4. Although this society has been always most honourably distinguished by the gentleness with which the negroes belonging to its trust estates have been generally treated, yet even these (by the confession of our own missionaries) are in too abject and depressed, and uncivilized a state to be proper subjects for the reception of the divine truths of revelation. They stand in need of some further marks of the society's regard and tenderness for them, to conciliate their affections, to invigorate their minds, to encourage their hopes, and to rouse them out of that state of languor and indolence and insensibility, which renders them indifferent and careless both about this world and the next.

5. A still further obstacle to the effectual conversion of the Negroes has been the almost unrestrained licentiousness of their manners, the habits of vice and dissoluteness in which they are permitted to live, and the sad examples they too frequently see in their managers and overseers. It can never be expected that people given up to such practices as these, can

can be much disposed to receive a pure and undefiled religion: or that, if after their conversion they are allowed, as they generally are, to retain their former habits, their christianity can be any thing more than a mere name.

These probably the society will, on inquiry, find to have been the principal causes of the little success they have hitherto had in their pious endeavours to render their own slaves real christians. And it is with a view principally to the removal of these obstacles that the following regulations are, with all due deference to better judgments, submitted to their consideration.

1. The first and most essential step towards a real and effectual conversion of our Negroes would be the appointment of a missionary (in addition to the present catechist) properly qualified for that important and difficult undertaking. He should be a clergyman sought out for in this country, of approved ability, piety, humanity, industry, and a fervent, yet prudent zeal for the interests of religion, and the salvation of those committed to his care; and should have a stipend of not less than 200*l.*

200*l.* sterling a year if he has an apartment and is maintained in the College, or 300*l.* a year if he is not.

This clergyman might be called (for a reason to be hereafter assigned) "The Guardian of the Negroes;" and his province should be to superintend the moral and spiritual concerns of the slaves, to take upon himself the religious instruction of the *adult* Negroes, and to take particular care that all the Negro children are taught to read by the catechist and the two assistant women (now employed by the society) and also that they are diligently instructed by the *catechist* in the principles of the christian religion, till they are fifteen years of age, when they shall be instructed by *himself* with the adult Negroes.

This instruction of the Negro children from their earliest years is one of the most important and essential parts of the whole plan; for it is to the education of the *young* Negroes that we are principally to look for the success of our spiritual labours. These may be easily taught to understand and to speak the English language with fluency;

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these may be brought up from their earliest youth in habits of virtue, and restrained from all licentious indulgences: these may have the principles and the precepts of religion impressed so early upon their tender minds as to sink deep, and to take firm root, and bring forth the fruits of a truly christian life. To this great object, therefore, must our chief attention be directed; and as almost every thing must depend on the ability, the integrity, the assiduity, the perseverance of the person to whom we commit so important a charge, it is impossible for us to be too careful and too circumspect in our choice of a CATECHIST. He must consider it as his province, not merely to teach the Negroes the use of letters, but the elements of christianity; not only to improve their understandings, but to form their hearts. For this purpose they must be put into his hands the moment they are capable of articulating their words, and their instruction must be pursued with unremitting diligence. So long as they continue too young to work, they may be kept constantly in the school; as they grow fit to labour, their

their attendance on the CATECHIST must gradually lessen, till at length they take their full share of work with the grown Negroes.

A school of this nature was formerly established by the society of Charlestown in South Carolina, about the year 1745, under the direction of Mr. Garden, the bishop of London's commissary in that province. This school flourished greatly, and seemed to answer their utmost wishes. There were at one time sixty scholars in it, and twenty young Negroes were annually sent out from it well instructed in the English language, and the christian faith. Mr. Garden, in his letters to the society, speaks in the highest terms of the progress made by his scholars, and says, that the Negroes themselves were highly pleased with their own acquirements. But it is supposed that on a parochial establishment being made in Charlestown by government, this excellent institution was dropt; for after the year 1751, no further mention is made of it in the minutes of the society. From what little we know of it, however, we may justly conceive the most pleasing hopes from a similar foundation at Barbadoes.

2. The next consideration is in what method are the grown Negroes to be instructed; and how much time is to be appropriated to this purpose.

Our catechists, in the instructions they have hitherto given to the Negroes, seem in general to have confined themselves to the use of tracts, which, though excellent in their kind, and highly useful and proper for more cultivated minds, yet contain many things much above the comprehension of a Negro. It may indeed be doubted, whether any of the religious tracts now in use among us are sufficiently level to their capacities. It will be found necessary perhaps to draw up something for their use. This probably the society would think fit to leave to the superintending clergyman whom we called the Guardian of the Negroes, and might be deferred till he had made himself well acquainted with their tempers, capacities, dispositions, manners, customs, peculiar idioms, and modes of thinking; to all which, the method of instruction should be carefully and skilfully accommodated*.

* Since this was written, two very useful tracts, viz. An Abridgement of Bishop Wilson's Instructions for the Indians, and Lectures given to the Negroes by Mr. Duke, late

In general, it is obvious that the lectures given them, and the sermons preached to them, should be as easy, simple, perspicuous, and familiar as possible; beginning with a few of the plainest doctrines of revealed religion, and from those deducing the great practical duties of piety, mercy, justice, temperance, chastity, fidelity, honesty, industry, obedience, contentment, patience, and resignation. Above all things, some of the most useful, most intelligible, and most affecting passages of Scripture should be selected and explained to them out of the historical books of the Old Testament, the Psalms, and Proverbs, but principally from the Gospels, from the discourses and parables of our Lord, and the narratives of his sufferings, death, and resurrection; which last are calculated, and are by experience found, to strike their minds more forcibly than any other topics.

It is the practice in the French plantations* for

late Rector of St. Thomas in Barbadoes, have been printed, and dispersed over the West-India islands, by that very respectable society, The Associates of the late Dr. Bray.

* What is here and elsewhere said of the French plantations, was written before the French revolution; what alterations may have been introduced into their islands by that revolution I know not.

for the slaves to join in a short prayer in the field before they begin work, and in the evening when they finish it. It does not appear that there is any such custom on the society's plantations. It would therefore be highly proper and useful to introduce it, and to order both the missionaries and the managers to join with the Negroes in these field prayers with the utmost solemnity and devotion. A short form of prayer for this purpose should be composed by the Guardian, and other forms also to be used by the slaves in private, morning and evening. In these prayers might be briefly expressed some of the principal duties of a christian life, which, by being constantly repeated, would be insensibly and deeply impressed both upon their memory and their hearts; and thus these short petitions, while they excited pious affections, would convey at the same time much useful knowledge.

The same good purposes might also be answered in another and still more pleasing way. Many of the Negroes have a natural turn for music, and are frequently heard to sing in their rude and artless way at their work. This propensity might be improved to the purposes of devotion, as well as of instruction,

by composing short hymns, which should (like the prayers) contain some of the chief doctrines and precepts of the gospel, and should be set to plain, easy, solemn psalm tunes, as nearly resembling their own simple melody as possible. These might be used not only in the church, but when their task was finished in the field, and on other joyful occasions. This would make them see christianity in a much more pleasing light than they generally do, would make instruction a delight rather than a task to them, and would be found probably a much more effectual way of fixing their attention, and improving their minds than any other that can be devised.

But their religious progress might be still further assisted by the constant intercourse and conversation of the GUARDIAN and THE CATECHIST with them: by the habits of freedom, ease, and familiarity, in which they might live together; by watching the most favourable opportunities of instilling principles of virtue and religion into their hearts; by improving to the best advantage the seasons of sickness and affliction; by mingling even in their entertainments, their festivities, and amusements, and

and turning every little incident into an instrument of moral and religious improvement. This kind of familiar and friendly intercourse with their slaves, the French planters in general, but especially their ecclesiastics, cultivate in a much higher degree than the English, and the advantages they derive from it, both in a civil and religious view, are exceedingly important.

The attention and labour here required of their instructors are undoubtedly great, but not greater than the difficulty of the undertaking requires, and the importance of it deserves. And as their cares are to be confined to this one object, and they are to be liberally rewarded for their trouble, there is no part of their employment which they may not be reasonably expected to execute, and which numbers, perfectly well qualified, will not be ready on such terms to undertake. But in order to lighten their burthen a little, as well as to facilitate and accelerate the entire conversion of our Negroes as much as possible, it would be of the utmost use to select six or seven of the quickest and most docile of their children; to train them up with peculiar care and diligence

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to a complete knowledge of the English language, and the most essential doctrines and duties of christianity; and then employ them as assistants in teaching the other Negroes. These young coadjutors might be distinguished by a few peculiar indulgences; and in order to stimulate their endeavours, the rewards might be proportioned to their diligence, their activity, and success.

The general plan of instruction being thus settled, a very material part remains to be considered, what proportion of time will be requisite for carrying it effectually into execution.

The society having very properly and very humanely given Saturday afternoon to their Negroes for their amusements, the cultivation of their own little patches of land, and the care of their domestic affairs, it should seem that the *whole* of the Lord's day might be set apart for sacred uses. The time appropriated by our Catechist for the instruction of the Negroes appears to have been (besides the sermon or lecture) Sunday evening, after divine service was over. This certainly is not by any means sufficient for catechising, examin-

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ing, or otherwise instructing near three hundred Negroes, and yet it is difficult to obtain more of the Lord's day for that purpose, for two reasons. The first is, that it is the custom of the islands to hold their markets on Sunday, where the Negroes go to sell the produce of their land; and the next is, that the slaves consider Sunday as *their own time*, as a day of ease, cheerfulness, festivity, and respite from labour of every kind. They would think it, therefore, a great hardship to have the *whole* of their Sunday leisure taken up in learning the rudiments of religion, and devoted to the labour of the mind, as the rest of the week is to that of the body. The first of these obstacles can only be effectually removed by the provincial governments seeing in its true light the impiety of profaning the Lord's day by the worldly traffic, and the attendant vices of a market, which the *Code Noir* of the French islands absolutely forbids to be held on that day. In the meanwhile, it would not perhaps be impossible to find out some means for enabling the Negroes to dispose of their little articles of commerce within their owner's plantation. The other difficulty may be in a

great

great measure lessened, by a judicious division of all the intervals of Sunday leisure (before, between, and after divine service) betwixt innocent relaxation and religious instruction. If one might venture at this distance to fix on any time for the latter, it should be the early part of the Lord's day, from six in the morning to ten; but they who are on the spot must be the best judges what hours should be allowed for amusement, and what allotted to instruction. I shall only observe, therefore, that even instruction itself may in *some* degree be made an amusement by the means suggested above; that is, by the help of a little sacred melody adapted to the peculiar taste and turn of the Africans; than which nothing would be more likely to secure their attendance at church, and to draw them off from their heathenish Sunday recreations abroad, by providing them with others full as agreeable to them, and much more harmless, at home.

But besides the instruction given to the Negroes on the Lord's day, it may deserve consideration whether a religious society, as ours

ours is, would not think it expedient to allow a respite of one hour in *every* day to a certain number of slaves, for the purpose of attending their spiritual teacher, so that all of them, in rotation, may enjoy this benefit. Suppose, for instance, the whole number of slaves to be three hundred. Let fifty of them every day have one hour of rest extraordinary allowed them at noon, and let them employ that hour in acquiring the rudiments of christianity. In the course of a week the whole gang will have had one hour's instruction, and only one hour's labour of the whole number of Negroes will be lost to the plantation in the six working days. Indeed it is probable that there would be no loss of labour at all; for they would make ample amends for this little relaxation by redoubled diligence the rest of the day. And it would have this further good consequenee, that in conjunction with the other expedients already recommended, it would tend to make their religious instruction not what they are too apt to think it, a *task* and a *burthen*, but a *privilège* and an *indulgence*, and *relaxation* from toil; and they would

would most gladly exchange an hour's bodily labour for so much mental improvement. This hour in every day, added to their daily prayers and hymns, to their Sunday worship, and Sunday sermons, lectures, and examinations, would probably be sufficient for furnishing their minds with a very competent knowledge of the Christian faith, and would also answer another very humane and useful purpose, which will be hereafter mentioned.

3. Another great means of promoting and facilitating the conversion of our Negroes, would be to prevent as much as possible their communication with the Negroes of other plantations, and the importation of fresh slaves from Africa, both which circumstances, it has been observed, are apt to impede their progress in religion.

The former of these inconveniences might be in a great degree obviated by providing for them such amusements for their few leisure hours as they are most fond of, which might easily be done; but still more by confining their choice of wives to the limits of their master's plantations; a practice adopted by the French, and peculiarly calculated (as they find

find by experience) to domesticate their Negroes, and attended with the most beneficial effects. A small reward annexed to such marriages would soon render them the invariable practice of the plantation.

The mischiefs arising from the other cause above-mentioned, the frequent importation of new slaves from Africa (on whose minds it is always extremely difficult to make any religious impressions) can only be prevented by one means; by giving every possible encouragement to the increase of the native Negroes. For this purpose it will be of use to repeat in the strongest terms the injunctions which have been formerly sent out by the society to their managers, to shew the utmost attention, humanity, and gentleness to the pregnant Negresses, both before and after their delivery; to moderate their labour, to be cautious and tender in punishing them, to supply them plentifully with provisions, and to take care that both they and their infants have every kind of assistance and indulgence which their situation demands. It might be adviseable also to give little rewards, or grant certain privileges and indulgences to those Negresses, who have

have large families; and if there are any who have brought up decently and creditably an unusual number of robust and healthy children, to recompense those mothers with their freedom*. By pursuing these measures, and many others of the same nature, which prudence, humanity, and experience will gradually suggest, there is not the smallest doubt but the society will in a few years be enabled (as many other proprietors have been) to supply the natural mortality of their slaves by a constant succession of home-born Negroes. From this they will reap many substantial advantages. They will save the heavy expense of frequent purchases. Their plantations will be much better cultivated by their Creole slaves, who are far superior in fidelity, obedience, docility, and industry to the African Negroes; and what is of still greater importance, and more to our present purpose, their young Negroes will be much more easily trained

* How necessary it is to put in practice every humane expedient that may tend to preserve the lives of the Negro children, appears from this melancholy fact, that in one of our islands (and perhaps in others) *one fourth part* of all the Negro infants born there, die within fourteen days after the birth.—See Two Reports from the Assembly of Jamaica, p. 15.

trained up in the christian faith than those that come full grown from the coast of Guinea; and both their principles and their morals will be secure from all danger of being perverted and corrupted by the contagious example, conversation, and customs of their heathen countrymen.

4. When we are thus provided, or nearly provided, with a set of Creole or home-born Negroes, the labour of instructing or converting them will without doubt be greatly lessened: but our chief hopes of success must, as I before observed, arise from a gradual improvement of their condition, from imparting to them some of the common rights of human nature, and the common comforts of social life, from setting before them some little prospects of advantage, to call forth their emulation, to give more vigour and energy to their minds, and inspire them with some degree of inclination both for mental and spiritual improvement. They must in short be considered as men, and as moral agents, before they can be made christians. They must have a few of the blessings of this world communicated to them, that they may be able to form some

faint idea and conception what happiness is, and from thence be encouraged to render themselves capable of still greater degrees of it in a future state of existence.

With a view to this little advancement in their situation, the first points to be considered are their provisions, their clothing, and their labour. If in these main articles they are too rigorously treated, their strength will be too much exhausted, and their spirits too much sunk, to leave them either inclination or ability to go through any regular course of religious instruction. From the great attention which has always been shewn by the society to their Negroes, it would be natural to conclude, that in point of diet and clothing, they would be well and liberally supplied. How far this is actually the case, I have had no opportunity of being accurately informed. A proper inquiry will easily ascertain how the fact stands, and it is a circumstance which well deserves to be looked into with care.

With respect to the other point, the labour of the Negroes, the quantum of it is different on different islands, and different plantations; but upon the whole, after taking into consi-

deration the length of time they are employed in the field, in picking grass for the cattle (which in some islands is the practice) and afterwards in preparing their provision at home, and other domestic occupations in the evening, it does not appear that their hours of rest are in general sufficient to recruit them from the labour of the day.

It should seem therefore, as if on this account also, as well as for the purpose abovementioned, of giving sufficient time for religious instruction, it might be adviseable to allow one hour more of rest in a week to all the Negroes in rotation. For the reasons already assigned, the plantation would probably be no loser by this indulgence; or if some trivial loss of profit should accrue from it, this venerable society, whose principal object is not gain, but the advancement of piety and virtue, would probably think itself amply repaid by the advantage gained on the side of humanity and religion.

It may under this head deserve consideration, whether it would not be most advantageous for the master, as well as easiest for the slave, to assign the Negroes a certain task,

task, or stated portion of work in the day, rather than any given number of hours for labour. This would in a great degree remove the necessity of the whip, allow them more time for their own affairs, and gradually lead them to act as their own masters. At least a gang might be formed of the most regular and intelligent Negroes, to whom this privilege might be granted, which would have the additional advantage of inspiring others with an emulation to attain it. In this case it should be understood, that the time appropriated to religious instruction should be taken from their work, not their leisure, and the task set accordingly.

The practice, which has for many years prevailed, of assigning to each of the slaves a little portion of land, which is called *his own*, and on which he raises provisions, vegetables, and fruit for his family, and for the market, is a most admirable regulation, and ought to be kept sacred and inviolable; and the stronger and more favoured Negroes should on no account be suffered to wrest these allotments from the weaker, as is sometimes said to be

the case. The spirit and activity and ardour with which they cultivate these small peculiums, shews how much the idea of a little property enlivens and invigorates their minds, and how greatly it adds to their comfort, and their consequence in their own eyes.

But it is of still more importance to give them a *property* in their own families; to attach their wives and their children to one and the same plantation, and not allow them to be torn asunder from each other, as they too often are, and disposed of into different and distant estates, and even different islands. By putting a stop to this cruel and unnatural kind of divorce, and allowing them to entertain the soothing idea of being inseparably united to the plantations, and to each other, their social affections will be strengthened and improved; they will have something to be careful and anxious about; will begin to taste the comforts and the pleasure of domestic life; will feel themselves rising into importance, and becoming as it were members of the civil community in which they live. In this point also, as well as in many others, the French

Code

Code Noir pays a little regard to the feelings of nature, and *absolutely forbids* the separation of husband and wife, of parent and child.

A still further advance for the slaves in social life is to put them under the protection of *known and fixed laws;* a protection to which they have hitherto been almost utter strangers. In the English islands, the clothing, the provisions, the labour, the punishments of the slaves, are left entirely to the discretion of the owner or manager, and he may in all these points (if he be so disposed) treat them with great rigour, with very little fear of control from the magistrate or the laws. On the contrary, in the French islands the planters are obliged by law to furnish their slaves with a certain stipulated proportion of clothes and provisions, and if they neglect to do this, they are prosecuted and punished at the public expense. They are also restrained by law in the manner and degree of punishing their slaves; and if they either murder, or mutilate, or torture them, they are prosecuted according to the atrociousness of the case. It is to be hoped, that laws of this nature will some time or other be enacted in the British West-India islands.

islands *. But in the meanwhile the society may to a certain degree be legislators in their own plantations, and may not only send, as they have constantly done, *general orders* to their managers to treat their slaves with lenity and kindness, but may establish a *system of fixed laws* for the future regulation of their plantations. They may in particular absolutely prohibit certain kinds and degrees of punishments, and affix certain penalties to certain crimes, so as neither to trust too much to the discretion of a manager, nor yet to relax any thing of that exact and steady discipline which is no less essential to the success of the plan here proposed, than to the general preservation of order, regularity, and obedience on the plantation. In perfect consistence with this, the society may, if they think fit, compose a *Code Noir* for their own estates, which might be promulged and lie open to the inspection of all the Negroes, who should look up

* This has been actually done in some of the islands since this Essay was written. See more particularly the new consolidated Act of Jamaica, and an Act for the better protection of Slaves, passed in Grenada in the year 1788; in both which are some wise and humane regulations in favour of the Negroes.

up to it as the great charter, not indeed of their liberties, but of certain grants and privileges, which they should have a right to claim, and of which it should not be in the power of a cruel and oppressive manager to deprive them.

And for their further security in this respect, another provision might be made for them, which would be no less useful than humane. In South America every Indian district has its protector, to whom the wretched slaves may fly for refuge and relief, when the hand of oppression becomes too heavy to be borne; and the principal ecclesiastics are empowered to inform and admonish the civil magistrate whenever the Indians are deprived of their just rights. In the French islands, the Negroes, when cruelly treated, may have recourse to the *procureur*, who is obliged to redress their grievances without trouble or expense to them. This pleasing and delightful institution of a legal *protector* for the injured slave (not much unlike that of a *patron* for the conquered cities and provinces of the Roman empire) is unknown in the British West-India islands.

in a point of view very different from that in which their sufferings naturally lead them to consider it, and would operate as a most powerful and almost irresistible instrument of conversion. Apprehensions, perhaps, may be entertained, that a practice of this sort might injure the produce of the plantation, by lessening the number of slaves. But the privilege might be restrained to a very few in a certain number of years; during which time the places of those who were become free might be supplied by the natural increase of the Negroes; and they who were thus enfranchised should be obliged to continue for a stated time, as day-labourers on the plantation, at a certain stipulated price. This would introduce by degrees, a new race of free, hardy labourers, who had been brought up in habits of industry, and accustomed to the heat of the climate, and who, from that spirit of activity which never fails to accompany freedom, would do more work in less time, and at a much less expense to the society, than any equal number of slaves. It is indeed the decided opinion of some of the best and most experienced judges, that the sugar islands might be cultivated by hired

labourers

labourers of this description to much greater advantage than they are at present*.

5. It will not, however, be sufficient for this purpose to mitigate the servitude of the Negroes in the instances here specified, unless an equal attention is paid to the improvement of their morals. It is a fact which will hardly be credited by those who are not acquainted with it, that not only the unconverted Negroes, but even those who have been baptized, are still permitted to have a plurality of wives, and sometimes also a promiscuous intercourse with the other Negro women. And what is still more deplorable, they who ought to be the natural guardians and protectors of the younger female slaves, I mean the white managers and overseers, are, it is said, too often the

* I am of opinion (says Mr. Braithwaite, late agent for the island of Barbadoes) that if the cultivation could be performed by Negroes working as day-labourers, it would be much more for the interest of the planter. If the Negroes were to be set generally at liberty at once, they would not work; but by giving them good principles, and inducing them to confine themselves to one wife, and thereby attaching them to the interest of their family, I think you might by degrees induce them to labour.—Mr. Braithwaite's Evidence before the Privy Council. A. No. 37.

the great corrupters of their innocence, and set an example of shameful licentiousness, which the slaves seldom fail to follow. This is an evil of the first magnitude, and as far as it is found, after a strict inquiry, to exist on the society's estates, demands immediate remedy; for it must evidently counteract, and entirely defeat, all attempts to possess the minds of the Negroes with just sentiments of religion. It should therefore be hereafter an invariable rule on the society's plantation, that every Negro who has been baptized in his infancy, and educated from that time in the christian religion, should be restrained to one wife, to whom he should be legally and solemnly married, according to the rites of the church of England, and not be allowed to divorce, except for adultery.

With respect to those Negroes who have not been converted to christianity till after they have arrived at a state of manhood, and have connected themselves perhaps with many wives; these should if possible be prevailed on, by argument and exhortation, to select out of them one more beloved than the rest, to whom they should attach themselves solely for the

rest

rest of life. If however they cannot be brought to this by gentle means, it then remains a question for the society to decide what ought to be done under such circumstances; whether it would be prudent, or indeed practicable, to dissolve by force attachments already formed; or whether some indulgence in this point should not rather be granted to the former ignorance and weakness of these poor converted heathens; on the express condition however of their adding no more to the number of their wives. But *it is indispensably necessary* that *all the slaves without exception* should be absolutely restrained from a promiscuous intercourse with women to whom they are not married. These regulations, besides the moral improvements they will introduce, will be highly advantageous in another point of view. They will conduce most essentially to the natural increase of the Negroes. For it is allowed on all hands, that nothing has tended more to obstruct that increase than plurality of wives, the premature and promiscuous commerce of the sexes, the want of laws to encourage regular marriage, and the little

little attention paid to the cultivation of morality and religion among the slaves*.

And if, in addition to this, a little more indulgence and respite from labour was granted to pregnant Negresses, the tax on infant Negroes repealed, and the number of male and female slaves made nearly equal, in a few years the native Negroes would be so much multiplied, that there would be no necessity for any further importation.

It is only requisite to say further on this head, that if there has been any illicit commerce on the society's estate between the managers and any of the female slaves, the most peremptory injunctions should be sent to them to abstain from it for the future; and as one means of prevention, none but married men should be admitted to be managers on the society's plantations. In this instance also the French shew a most laudable degree of attention to their Negroes. By the eleventh article of the *Code Noir*, all the freemen of the

* See the answers from the several islands to the heads of inquiry, sent by the Privy Council, particularly those from Antigua, Grenada, and St. Christopher's.

the islands, whether white or black, are absolutely forbid to live in concubinage with their slaves; a fine of three hundred livres is imposed on those who transgress; and if it is the master of the slave who has committed the offence, he is deprived both of the slave and the children she has by him, who are adjudged to the hospital of the place, and rendered incapable of ever being made free.

6. There is only one other provision I have to suggest, but it is of so much importance, and indeed of such absolute necessity, that without it all the rest would probably be of little avail.

Whoever looks into the minutes or journals of the society, respecting the Barbadoes estate, and particularly into the letters of the catechists, who have successively resided there, to the secretary, will, I believe, find very little information indeed concerning the spiritual state of the Negroes, the instructions they have received, and the progress they have made in the faith and the practice of christianity. When the catechists have been particularly pressed by the society, they have spoken more explicitly, but not very com-

fortably, on these points. But in general they have said of late years, little more than that so many Negroes have been born or baptized, and so many have died. Concerning every thing else, as far at least as religion is concerned, we are at this hour left by them almost entirely in the dark.

If ever therefore the preceding regulations, or any part of them, should be adopted by the society, it will be highly requisite to give the strictest injunctions to our two missionaries, *the guardian* and *the catechist*, to transmit to the secretary once or twice in every year an exact, minute, and circumstantial account of every measure that has been taken respecting the instruction of the Negroes, and of the effects these measures have produced. They must be required to specify distinctly and clearly what number of Negroes, infants or adults, have been baptized, what number of children are in the school, what progress they have made in the English language, and in the principles of religion; how many hours are employed every day in teaching the children, in catechizing the youth, in giving instruction to the adult, either in the church, or in

in the field, or in private and personal conversation. Whether the field prayers and hymns, the family prayers, the private prayers, are regularly and constantly kept up; whether the Negroes attend willingly or are compelled to attend divine service on Sundays punctually, morning and afternoon, and how many are absent, and for what reasons; whether they behave there decently and devoutly, and seem to understand the service, the sermons, the lectures, and all the other instructions that are given them; whether they appear to be impressed with a serious and vital sense of religion, and shew by their conduct that they are *real* and *sincere*, not merely *nominal* christians; whether they are distinguished from the unconverted Negroes of other plantations by the decency and regularity of their behaviour, by their sobriety, cleanliness, quietness, industry, fidelity, harmlessness, and obedience to their masters, managers, and instructors; whether in particular, they confine themselves strictly to one wife, are married according to the rites of the church of England, are guilty of no illicit intercourse with other women, whether they are comfortably

clothed and fed, and not overstrained with labour; are kept under exact discipline, and yet treated with humanity; whether their health is well attended to, and proper care taken of them in sickness and old age; whether the births exceed the burials, and whether their numbers, upon the whole, increase or diminish, and by what means; whether they enjoy to the full all the privileges granted them by the society; whether all the regulations respecting them prescribed by this Board are religiously observed by the missionaries, the managers, and the overseers.

Such is the proposal I had to offer to the society respecting their Negro slaves in the island of Barbadoes. To render it not altogether unworthy the attention of this venerable society, I have spared no pains in obtaining proper materials, and have had recourse to many authentic sources of information. That there may be in some parts of it both defects end errors, is highly probable; but if the general design of it should be approved, the joint wisdom of the society, and the zeal of active and able missionaries on the spot will complete the rest, will suggest every

necessary

necessary improvement, will supply what is wanting, and correct what is wrong.

It appears from the express words, as well as from the spirit and intention of our charter, from the general tenor of almost all our anniversary sermons, from the constant practice of the society in the earliest period of its institution, (as may be seen in Dr. Humphries's valuable history of it,) that the Negro slaves in the West-India islands have always been considered as one important object of its attention and care. And as by the late revolution in America all our missions in those provinces which are now become independent are at an end, our expenses on that continent must be considerably reduced, and the savings may be diverted into another channel. It is true, indeed, that the new settlers in Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, will stand in need of much assistance from us in forming their first religious establishments, and that assistance will undoubtedly be granted. But this is perfectly consistent with every thing that is here desired for the benefit and comfort of our Negroes in Barbadoes. It should be remembered too, that although the new

colonists in America are undoubtedly entitled to our kindest attention and support, yet their situation is not altogether so deplorable and destitute as that of the Negroes. They are not heathens, they are not slaves; they have some christianity, some morality existing among them. The Negroes can scarce be said to have the smallest portion of either. Besides this, they have (many of them) been brought against their consent from their own country into ours; they have been delivered up with unlimited power into our hands; they are considered as part of our property and possessions; they have no friend, no protector but ourselves to look up to, and have therefore the strongest possible claim to our compassion and assistance, both in promoting their present comfort and their eternal welfare.

It happens most unfortunately, that at present the greater part of the West-India planters take no pains themselves, and give no encouragement to others, to educate the children of their slaves, or to instruct their adult Negroes in the principles of morality and religion, although strongly urged to do so several

several years ago, by official letters from his Majesty's then secretary of state for the colonies to the Governors of the West-India islands. They are afraid, it seems, of any new plans whatever being introduced among their slaves. They are afraid that any the smallest degree of knowledge, even of the Scriptures themselves, will raise their thoughts above their condition, will render them less diligent in their work, less submissive to their masters. They object more particularly to that first and most fundamental requisite to instruction of any kind, *the teaching the children of their Negroes to read*, thinking that it will tend to corrupt their principles and disincline them to labour. It would be extremely easy to shew that all these apprehensions are perfectly groundless and unnecessary, and that the precepts and doctrines of the Gospel strongly impressed on the minds of the Negroes, would be the best possible means of keeping them firm to their duty, and of rendering them industrious, honest, sober, faithful, and obedient to their masters, as they are expressly enjoined to be in Scripture, under pain of eternal punishment in a world to come. But the best

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and most convincing proof of all this will be *experience*, the experience of this society, the actual effects produced on their own Negroes, by teaching them to read the Bible and Common-Prayer Book, and instilling into them right principles of morality and religion. When the other planters see on the society's plantations a little community of *truly christian* Negroes, impressed with a just sense, and living in the habitual practice of the several duties they owe to God, to their masters, to their fellow-labourers, and to themselves; governed by fixed laws, and by the exactest discipline, yet tempered with gentleness and humanity, enjoying some little share of the comforts and advantages of social and domestic life, seeing their children virtuously and religiously educated, performing their daily tasks with alacrity and fidelity, and looking up to their masters as their friends, their protectors, and benefactors; they would be irresistibly led to imitate so striking, so edifying an example, and to realize on their own estates a scene so delightful to humanity, and so beneficial at the same time (as it unquestionably would be) *to the proprietors themselves.*

It

It is *this* consideration which makes it of such infinite importance that the plan here proposed, or something similar to it, should be adopted by the society. It is not merely the advantages that would result from it to our own Negroes (great as they undoubtedly would be) that should recommend this measure to us; it is still more, that extensive and highly beneficial influence it would have on *all the British West-India islands.* It would render the society's plantation a MODEL for all the other planters to follow. It would give it the glory of founding a NEW SCHOOL FOR PIETY AND VIRTUE in the Atlantic ocean, of raising a noble structure of religion in the western world, of leading the way perhaps to the future conversion and salvation of more than five hundred thousand human beings, with all their countless descendants to the remotest generations.

This surely is a prospect sufficient to animate our zeal in so glorious a work; and if after all, our attempts should fail, we shall at least have discharged our duty; we shall satisfy ourselves and the world, that nothing has been left untried; and that the conversion

of

of the Negroes is a hopeless and impracticable undertaking: a declaration which at present we are not, I apprehend, sufficiently prepared and authorized to make; because every thing that *may* be done, has *not* been done, and because it appears, from the most undoubted testimony, that many thousands of slaves, both in the Danish islands, and in our own island of Antigua, have been actually and effectually converted to the christian faith*. This affords us just ground to hope that our attempts also will, with the blessing of Providence, finally succeed. And if they do, we shall have the satisfaction of applying our trust

* See a very excellent paper delivered into the committee of the Privy Council by *the United Brethren* (commonly called Moravians) containing a short account of their endeavours to promote christianity among the heathens, particularly among the Negroes in the West-India islands. It appears from this account that at the end of the year 1787, the number of real Negro converts under their care in the British and Danish islands was 16,045. Vid. Report, Part 3, No. 2. Mr. Braithwaite (the late worthy agent for Barbadoes) says, that great advantages have arisen to the Planters from the labour of the Moravian missionaries in the island of Antigua.—Report of Privy Council, Barbadoes, A. No. 18.

trust (without interfering with its original design) to the very noblest purpose to which it can possibly be directed. We shall relieve ourselves from the uneasiness of possessing a species of property which in its present state cannot but sometimes give pain to a religious society, but which, with the improvements here proposed, will not only perfectly accord with our character and our institution, but give fresh credit and consequence to both in the eyes of all mankind.

A

CHARGE

DELIVERED TO

THE CLERGY

OF THE

DIOCESE OF LONDON,

AT THE

PRIMARY VISITATION OF THAT DIOCESE,

IN THE YEAR 1790.

THE SIXTH EDITION.

Reverend Brethren,

It is now upwards of two years since I was appointed to fill this important see; and it may perhaps have been expected that I should have taken an earlier opportunity of assembling you together for the purpose of obtaining a more intimate acquaintance with my diocese, and the various concerns belonging to it. But I conceived that this end would be more effectually, though not so immediately, answered, by waiting till the usual period of a visitation returned, and in the meanwhile collecting all the information I could from various quarters; and more particularly from the answers to the several queries that were some months ago circulated round the diocese.

From these, as from the most authentic sources, I shall now select for our mutual consideration such topics as appear to me most important. But I cannot do this without first satisfying

satisfying your feelings and my own, by offering some part at least of that tribute which is justly due to the memory of that great and good man who immediately preceded me, and whose loss we have all so many reasons to lament *. To do full justice to such a character as his, is much beyond my power, and is more than our present business, and the time allotted to it would admit. It must be left to those whose peculiar province it is to undertake such a task, and whose abilities are equal to the subject. But we may be allowed in the meanwhile to pay a transient homage at least to the talents and virtues of this excellent prelate, and learn to profit by them both. We may justly admire the universality of that genius which could apply itself, and with almost equal success, to so many different branches of literature; to poetry, to grammar, to criticism, to theology, to oriental learning. In each of these he has displayed the talents of a master, and the originality of true genius. But in that admired work, the Prelections on the sacred Poetry of the Hebrews, he has described and illustrated the distinct

* Bishop Lowth.

distinct properties and excellencies of each particular species of that poetry with such admirable taste and skill, with such exuberant richness of imagery, such variety, copiousness, elegance, and rotundity of style, as few writers have ever yet equalled in a language not their own.

With such various and distinguished talents in almost every branch of literature; with a conduct perfectly inoffensive and irreproachable; with a temper naturally mild and even; with manners the most gentle, unassuming and conciliating, it can be no wonder, if he attracted the notice and the patronage of the great, whose friendship gradually raised him through the various honours of his profession to that high station which he was so peculiarly qualified to dignify and adorn. And this in fact we all know he did while his health and vigour of mind and body remained firm and unbroken. But the very painful disorders and severe domestic losses with which it pleased God to afflict him in the evening of his life, and which he bore with the most perfect fortitude, composure and resignation,

soon

seen rendered it impossible for him to take that active part in the affairs of his diocese, which otherwise he was perfectly well disposed, and perfectly well qualified to take. Yet under all these disadvantages he found means to exert himself effectually in one remarkable instance, and to render himself most eminently useful, not only to his own diocese, but to the whole church of England, and to religion at large. I mean, the noble stand he made against the validity and legality of *general bonds of resignation*. By his perseverance and firmness in combating the received doctrine respecting these bonds, he finally annihilated them; and thus rescued the clergy and the church of England from that oppression, and that disgrace in which they had so frequently been involved by those shameful and collusive contracts between the patron and the incumbent.

It is with difficulty I restrain myself from entering more minutely into the various excellencies of this distinguished prelate, with whose friendship I was honoured, and whose memory I shall always reverence; but I must not

not detain you any longer from the business in which we are all more immediately interested.

Now the first thing that presents itself in your answers to the queries is that most important article on which my thoughts have long been anxiously engaged, and which indeed must be the foundation of every ministerial duty, the article of *residence*.

It is with singular pleasure I observe that there are in this diocese many excellent parochial clergymen, who reside constantly on their benefices; who enter with zeal and ardour into all the various duties of their profession, and give up their whole time and thoughts to the instruction, the edification, and the salvation of their respective flocks. Most honourable is it for them, and most happy for their people, when this is the case. But this, alas! is not always the case! There is much too large a proportion (especially in some districts) who live at a distance from their cures, and whose parishioners must of course be deprived of those various and important benefits which result, and which can *only* result from the personal care and constant attention

of the principal himself. To lessen this evil as much as possible is an object of such unspeakable magnitude and importance, and will so materially contribute to the credit of our order, to the success of our labours, to the advancement of religion, and the welfare of the community, that I cannot allow myself to doubt your readiness to assist me in removing every difficulty and every obstacle to the attainment of an end which it is our common interest, and our common duty, to promote.

There are indeed two impediments to constant residence which cannot easily be surmounted; the first is (what unfortunately prevails in some parts of this diocese) unwholesomeness of situation; the other is the possession of a second benefice. Yet even these will not always justify *a total and perpetual* absence from your cures. The unhealthiness of many places is of late years, by various improvements, greatly abated, and there are now few so circumstanced as not to admit of residence there in *some* parts of the year, without any danger to the constitution.

In the case of two benefices, where the livings are held by dispensation, the very instrument

strument of dispensation requires that the incumbent shall, on that benefice from which he is most absent, preach thirteen sermons in the year, and exercise hospitality for two months. But though that instrument requires no more than this, yet where it can be done with any convenience, it will be highly useful for the incumbent to divide his time equally between his two benefices; or rather to distribute it in such proportions as the size and magnitude and importance of each seems to demand. It was on this ground, I apprehend, that dispensations to hold two benefices were originally granted. They were granted as rewards to men of extraordinary talents, learning and piety; and it was presumed that clergymen of this description might, by dividing their care between two parishes, render their abilities, their zeal, their activity, more extensively useful, than if they had been confined entirely to one.

Whoever then possesses this privilege, will feel himself bound in conscience to act up to the spirit and the conditions of it. He will, if possible, reside alternately on *both* his benefices. But if there should be any real and

unavoidable impediment to this, he will at least fix his abode constantly on one, and will most clearly see that an entire desertion of *both* his benefices is a violation of duty which nothing can justify, and which cannot be endured.

But the greater part consists of those who have only one benefice; and as there is then no other to draw off the incumbent's attention from that one object, it is evident that nothing but extreme ill health, or some other equally just and powerful impediment, can excuse him from that residence which is required by the laws of the land both civil and ecclesiastical, as well as by every motive that can bind the conscience, or influence the conduct of an honest man. These motives will, if I augur right, have their full force on minds such as yours, and will lead you even to anticipate my wishes in this instance. You will yourselves feel much more forcibly than I can represent to you, the propriety, the decency, the duty of living in the midst of your parishioners, and of making that your principal home, where the scene of your principal business lies; and you will not, I persuade myself, allow your-

selves

selves to be prevailed on by any temptations of ease, of pleasure, or of mere convenience, to abandon those of whose salvation you have most solemnly taken the charge, and bound it by the most sacred ties upon your own souls. You will feel that the care of a parish is a most serious and important trust, and that it is not, without the most indispensable necessity, to be devolved on any other but the incumbent himself. You will undoubtedly recollect, that when you are instituted to a benefice you do not say that you will execute the office by yourselves, *or by your sufficient deputy*. No. The bishop does in the most express terms commit to you, and to you only, the cure of the souls of that parish, and you must in your own persons be answerable for their salvation. Stewards, watchmen, shepherds, labourers, these, and every other expression that implies *personal attention*, unremitted assiduity, vigilance, and fidelity, are applied to you in Scripture. "You are commanded before God and the Lord Jesus Christ to be instant in season, and out of season, to reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine; to watch in all things; to do the work of an evangelist, and

and make full proof of your ministry." And the ordination office enjoins "that you never cease your labour, your care, and diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are, or shall be committed to your charge, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge of God, and that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you, either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life."

These are all of them most evidently *personal duties*; and it is to my conception utterly impossible for any man who seriously believes that he must give an account of his stewardship at the last day, to read such injunctions as these, and then render himself incapable of fulfilling them, by needlessly absenting himself from his cure, seeking amusement or employment elsewhere, and trusting to another for the discharge of duties, which belong *solely and entirely* to himself. Let him be ever so careful in the choice of his substitute, can he be perfectly sure that nothing necessary will be omitted, and that not only all the stated offices of the church, but all

the various and no less important *private* duties of the pastoral care will be performed with the same exactness and punctuality as if he himself had been present? Is he in short prepared to answer, as he must, at the tribunal of Christ, for every neglect that has happened, every soul that has been lost among those committed to his care, and whom perhaps he has never seen or thought of for months and years together? This is a most awful consideration; and I leave it to the serious attention of every one whom it concerns.

Another circumstance which deserves notice, and seems to require regulation, is the Sunday duty performed in the churches of this diocese. I observe that in general, throughout the county of Essex at least, there is service only once in the day. I observe too that this has in several parishes been a long established custom, and therefore I impute no blame to those who have only conformed to that custom. Yet still I conceive they will upon reflection see the necessity of making some improvement in this article. In most other dioceses the practice, I believe, is different.

ferent. In that at least from which I was removed to this, there were through a very considerable part of it, and that even in the smallest parishes, not only prayers, but a sermon too, both parts of the day. I do not mean to require this from you; but I do very earnestly recommend it to you, in general, to have a sermon once, and prayers twice in the day, and more especially in those places where this was formerly the practice, and where single duty has been a late innovation. *There* I must beg that the ancient custom may be restored. In other cases, and particularly where the parishes are so near each other, that the congregations not only may, but actually do go from one church to the other, there perhaps service once a day in each may be sufficient. But where this is not the case, it appears to me highly necessary that each parish should be called to public worship, as the canons, the liturgy, and the rubric evidently require, both morning and evening. Unless this is done, the service is incomplete, there will be one half of the day totally unoccupied by religious duties; and if it is not employed in them, it will be employed, I fear, in a very different

different manner. It is too large a portion of time to be trusted entirely in the hands of the common people. It is too much to be spared from that sacred day, the whole of which, even when most religiously observed, is hardly sufficient to counteract the bad impressions of the other six days of the week. On the due observance of this day, and the appropriation of a large portion of it to sacred purposes, depends, I am convinced, the very existence of religion in this country. Scarce one symptom of it ever appears among us, except on the Lord's day; and when the sanctity of that is gone, every thing is gone with it. We cannot therefore bestow too much time and pains in keeping up to the utmost, the spirit of that divine institution, we cannot rescue too much of it from the growing encroachments of worldly business, and worldly pleasure.

It appears indeed that some exertions rather more than common are necessary to awaken in the general mass of the people that sense of duty, and ardour of devotion, which seem almost extinguished in their breasts. It appears that though your efforts for that purpose seem not to have been wanting, yet, in many places,

places, scarce any of them can be prevailed on to attend the sacrament of the Lord's supper, or send their children to be instructed in the catechism. The consequence is, that both these duties are in some parishes entirely omitted, and in several others, are with great difficulty kept from sharing the same fate. Yet nothing is more certain than that they are both of them duties of the very highest importance. What then is to be done? Shall we entirely give up these great points, or shall we not rather redouble our earnestness and assiduity in pressing the indispensable necessity of them on the minds of the people, and even call in to our aid every expedient that seems likely to attract their notice and fix their attention? Now there are two things which appear to me to be extremely well calculated for this purpose: The first is a regular course of lectures on the church catechism; the other is the institution of Sunday schools.

The former may be given in country parishes, during the summer months, in that part of the day when there is no sermon. In London it may, for a part of the winter, be substituted in the room of the afternoon sermon.

Such

Such a practice will, I know from experience, be attended with the very best effects. The novelty of it will draw your parishioners to church, and engage their attention. It will give an opportunity of instructing not only the children, but many grown people in country parishes, in the principles of the christian religion, of which they are in general most deplorably ignorant. And this being done methodically and systematically, and with a reference to the church catechism which they all have in their hands, will make a strong and lively impression on their memories and their minds. More particularly, in the course of it, the sacrament of the Lord's supper may be more minutely and familiarly and distinctly explained than in any other way, and the absolute necessity of receiving it, may be repeatedly and powerfully enforced. This, added to sermons and private exhortation, will in the end have the effect of exciting a greater regard to this sacred ordinance. And these voluntary exertions of yours will please and conciliate the good-will and affections of your people; will convince them that you are *really interested* in their welfare; will awaken the same

same sense of duty in *them* that they observe in *you;* and will render them more regular and punctual in their attendance both on the Lord's supper, and every other part of divine service.

But on the rising generation you may make still deeper and more lasting impressions, and that principally by the second thing I recommended to you, the institution of Sunday schools. These, I observe, have made their way but very slowly into this diocese, and are as yet found but in very few parts of it; in London and Westminster I believe not at all. This may be owing partly to the various objections that were at first raised against them; partly perhaps to an idea that they were not so necessary in the southern as in the northern parts of the kingdom, and that in the metropolis more especially, on account of the great number of charity schools, they were altogether needless. But I trust that neither these reasons nor any others (for there are none that deserve the least notice) will any longer operate on your minds to the exclusion of these most admirable seminaries of piety and virtue. The objections made to them are found on trial

to

to be perfectly frivolous and groundless; and so far is it from being true, that they are less wanted here than elsewhere, that from what I already know of the state of this diocese, from your own reports to me, they are peculiarly and indispensably necessary to restore and invigorate the spirit of religion among the lower classes of the community.

In London and Westminster, it is true, there are a multitude of charity schools, which may seem sufficient to answer this purpose. But upon inquiry, you will, I believe, find that even these, numerous as they are, comprehend but a very small part of the children of the poor; and that there are still in almost every parish, especially the larger ones, many hundreds of ignorant wretched young creatures of both sexes totally destitute of all education, totally unacquainted with the very first elements of religion, and who perhaps never once entered within the walls of a church. It is from these principally that our streets and highways are filled with miscreants of various kinds; and I believe few things would contribute more to lessen their number than the establish-

establishment of Sunday schools in every district of the metropolis. This effect has at least, I know, been experienced from it in several large, populous provincial towns of this kingdom, particularly in Manchester, where the Sunday schools contain, I believe, not less than five thousand children; and why the same effect should not follow from the same cause in this capital, it is not easy to comprehend.

But however this may be, certain it is, that in the kingdom at large nothing will more effectually serve the cause of religion and good morals than raising up a race of young people, who have been early and carefully and diligently instructed in the rudiments of christianity; who have been trained up from their very infancy in the habit of attending the house of God; who are strongly impressed with a reverence for all its sacred ordinances, and have been accustomed to spend the greatest part of the Lord's day religiously, seriously, and devoutly. When once a young succession of this kind has been brought up under your own hands, I will venture, without the least hesitation, to predict that you will see

a most

a most happy change in the appearance of your congregations, and the deportment of your parishioners; that you will see your churches crowded with worshippers, and your altars with communicants. I could say much more on this very interesting subject of Sunday schools; but having already explained my sentiments at large concerning them in a letter to the clergy of my former diocese, of which a few copies will now be put into your hands, I beg leave to refer you to that for farther information.

There is another point, to which I would beg leave to call your serious attention, and that is the improvement of our parochial psalmody. This most pleasing and affecting part of divine service is now (through a large part of the kingdom at least) rendered almost totally useless to the church of England, where on the contrary one should expect to find it in its highest state of perfection. But from this it is at a great distance indeed. In country parishes it is generally engrossed by a select band of singers, who have been taught by some itinerant master to sing in the worst manner, a most wretched set of psalm tunes

in

in three or four parts, so complex, so difficult and so totally void of all true harmony, that it is altogether impossible for any of the congregation to take a part with them, who therefore sit absorbed in silent admiration, or total inattention, without considering themselves as in any degree concerned in what is going forward. In London and a part of Westminster this business is in a great measure confined to the charity children, who though they exert their little abilities to sing their Maker's praises in the best manner they can, yet for want of right instruction to modulate their voices properly, almost constantly strain them to so high a pitch as to disgust and offend the ear, and repel instead of raising the devout affections of the hearers. And it is generally a contest between them and the organ which shall be the loudest, and give most pain to the ear.

By this means the chief end and design of psalm-singing is completely defeated. For whatever may have been advanced to the contrary, it is most certain that parochial psalmody was originally intended to be *a part of divine worship*, an offering of praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to the Almighty, in

which of course the whole congregation, as being all equally interested, were to take an equal share. And when this is done with propriety and judgment, it has a most noble and edifying effect; and (as a very good judge of musical composition has well expressed it) "forms one of the grandest scenes of unaffected piety that human nature can afford*."

It would therefore add greatly to the solemnity and dignity and beauty of our public worship, if this part of it was restored to its ancient purity and simplicity, and general congregational psalmody universally revived. For this purpose, in the London churches it would be extremely useful to select a few of the charity children, who have the best voices, and the best ear for music, from the rest, and have them taught to sing well and in their natural tone. And directions should be given to the organist not to drown and overpower the singers by the unremitted loudness and violent intonations of the full organ, but merely to conduct, and regulate and sustain their

* Dr. Brown's Dissertation on Poetry and Music.

their voices in a low and a soft accompaniment on what is called the choir organ. This would render the psalm-singing so pleasing and melodious, that the greater part of the congregation would soon be tempted, and by these helps would be enabled to join it.

In country parishes, where there are in general neither charity children nor organs, it may be more difficult perhaps to restore the psalmody to its primitive state, and banish the corruptions of it introduced by the select village choir. Yet the obstacles are by no means insuperable. By a little management the singers may be prevailed on to admit some of the plain psalm tunes, and more may gradually find their way into the church, in which the congregation, when familiarized to them, will soon become perfect, and prefer them to any other. This will be greatly aided by training up some of the most promising children of the parish in the constant practice of plain psalmody, till by degrees a large part of the congregation have been thus instructed from their youth, and a select band will be no longer necessary. This, I know, has been already done in several parishes with great success,

success, especially in those where Sunday schools have been established; in which it is often a part and a most useful part of their education to exercise and improve the scholars in psalm-singing, with which they are in general much delighted, and in more respects than one greatly benefited. By these means a considerable choir of well-taught young people may in a few years be formed in every church, who will serve as guides and instructors to the rest of the congregation; and when it is considered that there are now near three hundred thousand Sunday scholars in various parts of the kingdom, if one third of them can be taught to perform the best psalm tunes tolerably well, these useful institutions will contribute no less to the improvement of our parochial psalmody, than to the reformation of the lower orders of the people.

To render this a still more rational and edifying part of our public worship, a selection should be made (or some of those already made should be adopted) of proper portions of the psalms from the new version, which should be adapted to some of the plainest, simplest, and easiest of our most ancient and

popular melodies. By the frequent repetition of these, and the expedients above-mentioned, and many others that will naturally suggest themselves to men of judgment, zeal, and piety, there can be no doubt but that this part of divine service would quickly recover its ancient sweetness and solemnity, and become a most delightful and most interesting exercise of piety. Many of those who separate from our communion understand perfectly well the use and force of this commanding instrument of devotion, and apply it with success. With the same attention, and with perhaps still more skilful management, its success in our own churches would be still greater; and the effects of it in various points of view would be much more important than many are perhaps aware of. It would operate as a very powerful attraction to your people; it would render your congregations more numerous and more constant, it would enliven and animate their devotion, it would add one charm more to our excellent form of worship, and whenever you had occasion to solicit the benevolence of your parishioners for your charity schools, you would have no need to call in the

the aid of any other musical performers; for there is no other kind of musical composition so well calculated to touch and affect the heart, and melt it into tenderness, kindness, and compassion towards the whole human race, as well-constructed and well-regulated psalmody*.

At a time then when every other species of music is cultivated with uncommon ardour, and is become the prevailing taste and passion of the age, let some share of our attention be bestowed on our parochial psalmody; which, though of an humbler and more sober cast than the generality of our musical performances, yet from its connection with religion, from its forming an ancient and essential part of our public service, from its known and powerful influence on the minds and morals of the great mass of the people, is of more *real*, and *national*, and *practical* importance, than even those sublime and elaborate compositions

* Whoever wishes for further information on this subject, will receive great satisfaction from two very sensible little tracts lately published, one by Dr. Vincent, called Considerations on Parochial Music, the other by Mr. Wharton, entitled, An Essay on Psalmody.

for each church) with the same indulgence of a house to reside in. Finding then these laudable examples set by many excellent clergymen, all I have to do is to express my hearty approbation of them, to make them the guide of my own conduct, to convert a partial practice into a general rule for the whole diocese, and to desire that hereafter all titles for orders, and all appointments of curates, may be conformable to that rule. In establishing this regulation I think I may venture to promise myself that not only you yourselves, but every friend to religion, will go along with me. Indeed the public voice as well as the reasonableness of the thing itself, has long called for a little more indulgence towards the most laborious and most indigent classes of our order; and it is impossible to resist (even if you were disposed to do it, which you certainly are not) the general opinion of mankind. And where can this liberal system more properly originate than in that diocese, where, by the voluntary kindness of many individuals, the foundations of it are already laid; in that diocese to which the metropolis gives consideration and weight,

and to which the world will naturally look up for the first movements in a measure of this nature. Here too every article of subsistence, and every necessary of life must of course be more difficult to procure, and will fall more heavily on our curates, than in remoter counties; and in some parts of it, unwholesome air, broken health, and ruined constitutions require additional comfort, assistance, and support.

You are therefore, my brethren, most evidently and most peculiarly called upon by every circumstance of your situation, as well as by every ordinary motive of justice, humanity, compassion, and christian charity, to extend more widely the kindness you have already begun to exercise; and there is not, I trust, a single individual, who now hears me, that can withhold his approbation from such a proposition as this; that will not feel the equity and the justice of it; that will not even exert himself to the utmost in completing this work of brotherly beneficence, and in diffusing it gradually throughout the whole extent of this diocese.

I have now, my brethren, given you my sentiments

sentiments on such matters as your own answers to my queries have suggested to me; and the regulations I have proposed are such as appeared to me highly necessary not only to the general interests of religion, the welfare of our people, and the credit of our order, but (some of them at least) to the very existence of our ecclesiastical constitution, and to the permanency and security of our religious establishment. For let us not flatter ourselves, my brethren, that because we have the laws and the government on our side, we are therefore perfectly safe, are perfectly secure in our privileges and possessions, be our characters and our conduct ever so inconsistent with our profession, and our various duties ever so much neglected. At present it is true we enjoy a profound calm; we possess, I trust, a large share of the public esteem; we have received a recent and substantial proof of it, for which we ought to be thankful and grateful. But on what is this favour and this support of the legislature founded? Unquestionably on this idea, that we are by our ministerial labours promoting most effectually the peace, the morals, the good order, the

welfare,

welfare, and the happiness of the community. While this conviction prevails, we shall never fail to meet with countenance and protection. But if once we relinquish this ground; if we desert our proper stations, and rush into the world; if we consider our preferments merely as life estates, without any regard to the personal services and personal duties with which they are charged, we shall most assuredly forfeit the good opinion, and with that the support of the state; the firm ground we now stand upon will sink under our feet; we shall be left to combat our adversaries (who are neither few nor inactive) as well as we can; and we shall furnish them with arms against us infinitely more powerful than any they could fabricate themselves, and which they will not fail to use to our annoyance, perhaps ultimately to our destruction.

It is therefore most evidently our interest as well as our duty to demonstrate our gratitude to the public by redoubling our zeal and activity in our professional occupations. In our hands are placed to a great degree the morals and the religion of this country! A most sacred and important trust! And we cannot

cannot more effectually serve the state than by executing this trust with fidelity and care. In this great cause, my brethren, we are all embarked, from the highest to the lowest; and it is a cause worthy of our most strenuous exertions. It was with a view of impressing this great truth deeply on your minds that I have now trespassed so long (too long I fear) upon your patience, and have spoken with a plainness and a freedom, which I thought the occasion required. In a case where the interests of religion, and the salvation of mankind were concerned, I conceived it was my indispensable duty to state to you fairly, fully, and distinctly, whatever seemed to me necessary to promote those great ends. And such is the confidence I have in your candour, in your good sense, in your zeal for the welfare of those committed to your care, that you will, I doubt not, most cheerfully co-operate with me in every measure that tends to advance it, even though some of the measures proposed should be attended with a little personal inconvenience to yourselves. This is a sacrifice we must all of us sometimes make to duty; and the consciousness of having done this

this will afford us the most heartfelt satisfaction at a time when all earthly comforts will vanish away. To render thousands of our fellow-creatures virtuous and useful here, and to conduct them through the paths of true religion, to immortal glory and endless felicity hereafter, is the noblest employment in which a human being can be engaged. Most fortunately for us, my brethren, that employment is ours; and by a faithful discharge of it, the very lowest of our order may render themselves more useful to society, and more worthy of veneration and esteem, than all the sages and philosophers of pagan antiquity taken together. Not all their philosophy, not all their learning, not all their eloquence were ever able to correct the morals of a single village, or to introduce into it that decency, that regularity, that sanctity of manners, and in consequence of it, that comfort, ease, and happiness which we now scarce ever fail to see in every christian village, where there is a resident, a diligent, a conscientious, an exemplary clergyman. Let us then set a due value on the importance and dignity of our profession, and let it excite in us an honest ambition

tion to raise it and ourselves every day more and more in the estimation of mankind, by exerting our utmost efforts to diffuse both by our doctrine and our example a general spirit of true christian piety, and a general purity of manners throughout the land. By this we shall contribute our part, and a most essential part, to the welfare of the community; we shall add the powerful sanctions of religion to the authority of the laws, the silent operation of national virtue to the visible effects of political wisdom and integrity; and, above all, we shall secure to our country, and to ourselves, the favour and protection of that Almighty Being who can alone ensure to us the prosperity and tranquillity we now enjoy, whilst a large part of Europe is convulsed to its very centre; and who, amidst the dissolution of kingdoms and the wreck of empires, can alone preserve our admirable constitution both civil and ecclesiastical uninjured and unimpaired.

A

CHARGE

DELIVERED TO

THE CLERGY

OF THE

DIOCESE OF LONDON,

AT THE

VISITATION OF THAT DIOCESE,

IN THE YEAR 1794.

THE FIFTH EDITION.

Reverend Brethren,

WHEN I had last the pleasure of meeting you here, there were three subjects (among others occasionally touched upon) to which I endeavoured to draw your particular attention: these were, the institution of Sunday schools; the augmentation of the salaries of your assistant curates; and residence upon your benefices. It is not my intention at this time to resume or to enlarge further on these topics, and that for the best of all reasons, because in all these respects my purposes have been answered, and my wishes accomplished, as far as, from the shortness of the time and the difficulties to be encountered, could, perhaps, in any reason, be expected. Several Sunday schools have been set on foot, in different parts, where none existed before. Their good effects, wherever they *have* been established, are apparent and considerable. The clergy begin to be convinced of their im-

portance and utility; and they are gradually increasing and diffusing themselves over the whole diocese. It is, indeed, most devoutly to be wished, that they should become universal throughout the kingdom. For when we know that in other countries schools of *irreligion* have actually been established, and children regularly trained up, almost from their infancy, in the alphabet and the grammar of infidelity; when we know too that the utmost efforts have been made, and are now making here, to shake the faith of the lower orders of the people, and to render christianity an object of contempt and abhorrence to them; surely it behoves us to counteract and to guard against these nefarious attempts by every means in our power; and more especially by diffusing, as widely as possible, among the infant poor, the opportunities afforded by Sunday schools, of acquiring the soundest principles and the earliest habits of morality and religion.

Some progress has also been made, and I trust will continue to be made, in improving the situation and augmenting the salaries of the assistant curates, especially in those

unwholesome districts where it seemed to be most necessary. As to myself I can truly say, that their welfare, and their comfort, have always been among the objects nearest to my heart. I see with peculiar pleasure the prosperous state, the judicious management, and the liberal application of those noble funds, which have been raised in the diocese, for the relief of their immediate and most urgent necessities, and those of their families. Whenever further assistance is requisite, I shall be always ready to afford it to the utmost of my power; and to convince you that this is something more than words, it is my intention, after making proper inquiries in the course of this visitation, to give some immediate pecuniary aid to those curates whose wants are the greatest, whose families are the largest, and whose characters are the most respectable.

With respect to the last article mentioned, that of residence, although it is not yet become so universal in this diocese as it ought to be, and as by degrees I hope and believe it will be, yet still considerable advances have been made in it; and it is in a state far more promising and auspicious than it was four

years ago. In this, indeed, and in every other instance, I have (with a very few exceptions of little moment) received the most flattering proofs of the obliging and friendly disposition of the clergy in general, and of their constant readiness to comply with every reasonable requisition I had to make. Actuated by this motive, as well as by motives of a still higher nature, by a sense of duty and of conscience, and a conviction of the infinite utility and importance of parochial residence, especially in times such as these, considerable numbers of the clergy in this diocese have, of late, become resident either in the whole or in part, who never were so before; and it is but justice to add, that some of them have, in this instance, given proofs of disinterestedness, of magnanimity, and of self-denial, which are rarely to be met with, and which do infinite honour to them and to the profession at large.

There is another circumstance which has, I own, given me peculiar pleasure, and that is the much greater degree of attention which candidates for orders, in this diocese, have lately paid to their studies, and to their preparation for that sacred office, than they formerly

merly did. Nothing can be more different, or more creditable to them, than the appearance they now make in their examinations for orders, compared with what I remember a few years ago. This improvement seems to have arisen from various causes: among which may, I think, be numbered the directions that have been given them respecting the general course of their preparatory studies; the greater length of time afforded them for those studies, by fixing the age for their first ordination at twenty-three years complete; and their attendance on the public lectures in theology, given by the learned professors of divinity in both our universities, which I have for some time past required. I have now the greatest encouragement to *persevere* in requiring it; and I take this opportunity of declaring, in this public manner, that I shall hereafter consider an attendance on these academical lectures, and a certificate of such attendance, as an essential qualification for sacred orders.

I must also avail myself of this occasion to repeat a precaution relating to another point which I have formerly recommended to you,

and which I must now beg leave once more to impress very strongly upon your minds. The precaution I allude to relates to the persons you employ, either as constant curates, or as occasional assistants, in your respective churches. It becomes every day more and more necessary that you should take the utmost care respecting the character and conduct of those whom you thus employ. More persons than one have lately been detected officiating as clergymen, who were never ordained to that sacred office, from whence very mischievous consequences have arisen. I must therefore again and again reiterate my entreaties, that you will never engage any persons who are not well known to you, as your curates, without my knowledge, that I may inspect their letters of orders and testimonials, and inquire minutely and critically into their real history. You may, indeed, to a certain degree, do all these things yourselves. But permit me to say, that you have not, and cannot have, such opportunities of information as our situation and experience afford us. You may sometimes be, and some I know have been, imposed upon by forged letters of orders,

orders, and forged testimonials, which we, by knowing the seals and the hand-writing of the several bishops, can easily detect. It is therefore very properly and very wisely enjoined by the forty-eighth canon, that no curate, or minister shall be permitted to serve in any church without the knowledge and license of the diocesan; and with respect to those whom you call in only as occasional assistants, to perform any part of your duty, it is indispensably necessary, and it is expressly ordered by the fiftieth and fifty-second canons, that you should suffer no stranger to officiate in your church, without first requiring him to produce his license to preach, and entering his name in a book provided for that purpose. This provision relates more particularly to the cities of London and Westminster; and a want of attention to this rule has, in some late instances, been, to my knowledge, productive of very serious evils.

Having stated these few particulars relating chiefly to the discipline and order of the church, I now proceed to a subject of more general import, a subject highly important and interesting to us, as ministers of the gospel,

gospel, and immediately and intimately connected with our business and our profession; I mean THE PRESENT STATE OF RELIGION IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES; the influence it may have on the principles and the morals of this, and the new duties and obligations which this new situation of the christian world brings along with it respecting ourselves.

Among the great variety of most extraordinary and unexampled events which have taken place since we last met here, there is none more singular and astonishing than the success which has attended a new sect and description of men, who have of late made their appearance in Europe, and assumed the style and title of PHILOSOPHERS. These men, after having waged open war with the gospel for near half a century; after having all that time deluged Europe with their writings against it; after having assailed it with all the powers of wit, genius, eloquence, ridicule, calumny, and invective, and by these means considerably increased the number of their proselytes, and the boldness of their pretensions, have at length, from small beginnings, risen into consequence; have established

established a regular system and school of infidelity on the continent; have avowed their grand object to be the extirpation of christianity from the earth, and the substitution of philosophy in its room; and, to the astonishment of all the world, have actually found means in one part of Europe to carry this most singular project (to a certain degree) into execution.

If you ask what the meaning is, of that thing called PHILOSOPHY, which has thus in one country nearly supplanted christianity, and hopes to do it in others, I must refer you to the writings of all the great leaders of this new sect, of Helvetius, of Voltaire, of D'Alembert, of D'Argens, of Raynal; but above all, to that recent, most curious, and most authentic publication, the Posthumous Works of a late illustrious monarch on the continent, Frederick the Second. You will there see a faithful delineation of the real tenets and opinions of the most celebrated philosophers of Europe, of the founders and legislators of the great empire of infidelity, with the philosophic monarch himself at their head; you will see every secret of their hearts laid open in

in their familiar and confidential correspondence with each other; you will see that the grand object they had in view was, what I have already stated, the entire extinction of the christian religion; you will see that they were pretended deists, but real atheists; that although the *name* of a Supreme Being was sometimes mentioned, yet it was seldom mentioned but with ridicule and contempt; and that they never conceived him to be any thing more than the intelligent principle that animates all nature, the source of life and motion, the sensorium of the universe; but in other respects totally unconnected with this earth and its inhabitants, having no kind of direction or superintendence over them, and "as little disturbed (these are their own words) at what may happen to them as with what may happen to an ant-hill, which the foot of the traveller may crush, unperceived by himself."

In consequence of this doctrine, these philosophers of course rejected all idea of a Providence and a moral Governor of the world. They ascribed every event to fate or fortune, to necessity or chance; they denied the exist-

ence

ence of a soul distinct from the body; they conceived man to be nothing more than an organized lump of matter, a mere machine, an ingenious piece of clockwork, which when the wheels refuse to act, stands still and loses all power of motion for ever. They acknowledged nothing beyond the grave, no resurrection, no future existence, no future retribution: they considered death as an eternal sleep, as the total extinction of our being; and they stigmatized all opinions different from these with the names of superstition, bigotry, priestcraft, fanaticism, and imposture.

These are the principles uniformly diffused throughout the whole of that voluminous and extraordinary work to which I have alluded; and what name should be given to principles such as these no one can entertain a moment's doubt*.

But

* I should have felt some difficulty in referring the reader to a publication so full of impiety as this, had I not been perfectly convinced, that there can hardly be a more effectual antidote to modern philosophy than this very book, which was intended to disseminate it through the world, and may justly be considered as the grand code, the *opus magnum* of infidelity. The extreme weakness of the arguments advanced in it against the christian religion,

But what then are we to infer from all this? Is there any ground to apprehend that these principles will ever be generally received; that atheism will finally establish itself in that nation where it made its first grand effort; that it will from thence spread itself over the whole continent of Europe, and at length make its way into this island?

There are, I know, those that have entertained these fears; but I must confess myself not to be one of that number. I can never bring myself to believe, that any thing so contrary

religion, whenever any thing *like* argument is made use of; the wretched sophistry of all the metaphysical reasonings in it on a supreme intelligence, on the nature of man, on the organization of matter, on free agency, necessity, the eternity of the world, &c.&c.; the gross and fulsome adulation with which the several parties in this correspondence load their royal patron; the opprobrious epithets, and unbounded ridicule, which they constantly apply to religion, and every thing held sacred by men, not sparing even the DEITY himself; and the shameful profligacy which some of the principal characters concerned in it openly charge upon each other, cannot fail to shock and disgust every serious mind. And they present to us altogether such a picture of philosophy and philosophers, drawn by their own hands, as must for ever disgrace and sink them in the eyes of mankind, and confirm and strengthen the attachment of every thinking man to the christian faith.

contrary to nature and experience can ever happen*.

The ideas of a God, of a Providence, of a future state, are so natural, so congenial, so consolatory to the human mind, so necessary to support a frail being through the toils, the cares, the distresses, the calamities, the afflictions of the present life, that it is almost impossible to stifle them to any considerable degree, or to any great extent, among large bodies of men. It is not a very easy matter to take away at once the religion of a whole nation, even when another is offered in its room. We know that in the early ages of christianity, a great prince, at the head of a mighty empire, and of a powerful army, I mean the apostate Julian, failed in the attempt to annihilate the religion of Christ, and to restore paganism, although he exerted all the force of his wit, all the powers of his eloquence, and all the weight of his influence and his authority for that purpose; although he employed alternately menaces and arguments, persecution and persuasion; and although he tempted

* This part was written before there had been any public disavowal of atheism by the French government.

tempted his subjects with what a late celebrated historian somewhere calls "the elegant and cheerful divinities of Greece and Rome;" that is, in plainer terms, with all the licentious festivities and sensual indulgences of idolatrous worship.

But there was a power working against him which he felt too strong for him. He felt it as impossible to reconstruct the ruins of paganism, as to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem. In both cases he was overruled and baffled by a superior agency; by him who said, "that in Jerusalem not one stone should be left upon another:" and who also said, "that his church was founded on a rock, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it."

If then it is so arduous a task to make a whole nation pass at once from one religion to another, it must certainly be more difficult to make them rest satisfied without any religion at all; a circumstance which never yet happened since the world began. And, in fact, we find that the present governors* of the new commonwealth begin to think that their predecessors

* M. Robespierre and his friends. End of May, 1794.

decessors went a little too far. They find that mankind *will* have *some* religion, and are therefore gradually relaxing a little in that article. They have opened some of the churches that were before shut up; they profess to acknowledge a Supreme Being, and the immortality of the soul, and have ordered a festival to be observed on certain days in honour of THE ETERNAL*.

There

* This new confession of faith, introduced by M. Robespierre, has been considered by some as a great improvement in the religious system of our neighbours, and represented as a complete change from atheism to deism. That it has the name and shape of deism is most certain. But what *kind* of deism the author of it intended to establish, and what it was he meant by A SUPREME BEING, may tolerably well be collected from the following passage in one of the most popular and authentic papers of Paris, published during the administration of M. Robespierre.

"Provided the idea of a Supreme Being be nothing more than a *philosophical abstraction*, a guide to the imagination in the pursuit of causes and effects, a resting-place for the curiosity of inquiring minds, a *notion merely speculative*, and from which no *practical consequences* are to be applied to human life, there can be *no great danger* in such an idea. But if it is to be made the foundation of *morality*; if it is to be accompanied by the supposition, that there exists a GOD, who presides over the affairs of the world, and rewards or punishes men for their actions on earth, according to some principle of retributive justice, *there can*

There is therefore no reason to apprehend, that atheism will finally be established in any nation upon earth, much less that it will ever force itself upon this country, which, thank God! is not a soil fitted for so rank a weed; where scarce one solitary atheist has appeared like a comet once in a century, and after appalling and terrifying the inhabitants with a tremendous but momentary blaze, has sunk at once into obscurity and oblivion.

But though there is no ground for apprehending the introduction of atheism amongst us, yet we must not think ourselves secure from the inroad of *every* species of infidelity. It is not to be supposed, that THE PUBLIC REJECTION OF CHRISTIANITY, by the governing

can be no opinion more prejudicial to society." Courier Universel, 29th Frimaire (Dec. 19) 1793.

The reader will observe in this very curious extract, a plain and a just distinction made between the *Supreme Being* of philosophers, and the GOD adored by Christians, a distinction which he ought always to keep in mind; and when he is invited (as he now is) to exchange christianity for deism, he will remember the *sort* of Deity he is to acknowledge. It is the *Supreme Being* of M. Voltaire *, of M. Robespierre, and Mr. Paine; and is the very same that the last of these gentlemen has taken so much pains, in a recent publication, to recommend to this country.

* See above, p. 266 and 267.

verning part at least of a country so near our own, can possibly take place without *some* risk to ourselves, without *some* danger that our own people may catch the contagion of infidelity from their neighbours. For when we hear them (as we did repeatedly under their first rulers) representing our religion as a gross and palpable imposture; loading it with the most opprobrious appellations; treating it with every possible mark of ignominy and insult; and holding up its Divine Author, his laws, his ordinances, his institutions, his ministers, and his altars, to universal abhorrence and contempt; when we know that these bitter invectives against revelation have been circulated in the publications of the day, through every town and every village in this island, can we suppose it possible that all this should have made no unfavourable impressions on the minds of the people, especially of the illiterate, the ignorant, and the uninformed; that it should not have corrupted the religious principles of some, who were before untainted; that it should not have confirmed the infidelity of others that were wavering and irresolute; and that it should not have lessened in still

 more,

more, that respect, that reverence, that veneration for their Maker, their Redeemer, their religion, and every thing connected with it, which they had before been accustomed to entertain?

For these reasons it will be highly necessary for every one entrusted with the care of a parish, to guard his people, with the utmost care, against these dangers; to pay a more than ordinary degree of attention to their instruction in the great fundamental truths of religion, both natural and revealed, more especially the doctrines of a moral Governor of the world, of a Providence, a Redeemer, a resurrection, a future state, and a future distribution of rewards and punishments; and to repel, with vigour and with effect, all those charges of fraud, falsehood, and fanaticism, which have been so liberally thrown on our religion. We must, my reverend brethren, at this perilous crisis, contend with *peculiar* earnestness for the faith once delivered to the saints, and shew that christianity is not, as our enemies affirm, "a cunningly devised fable," but a REAL REVELATION FROM HEAVEN, supported by such a body of evidence,

dence, as it is impossible for any unprejudiced mind to resist; by a long train of prophecies, by the most astonishing and best attested miracles; by strong internal marks of truth; by the purity of its precepts, the sublimity of its doctrines, the perfect and unspotted character of its divine Author; by an innumerable company of confessors, saints, and martyrs, who have sealed their testimony to it with their blood, and by the visible good effects it has produced in promoting the welfare, comfort, and happiness of mankind.

All these evidences, it is well known, with many other important and collateral proofs of the truth of our religion, have, at various times, been stated to the world, with great ability and great force of argument, by men of the first distinction for talents and learning in this country, both of the laity and the clergy, both in the establishment and out of it*.

* Bishop Taylor, Stillingfleet, Locke, Clarke, Addison, Bentley, Butler, Doddridge, Leland, Lardner, Soame Jenyns, Beattie, Bryant, and Paley. The Horæ Paulinæ, and the View of the Evidences of Christianity, by the last-mentioned author, are works of a very original character, and very distinguished excellence, and come most seasonably at this time to check the progress of modern philosophy in this part of the world.

Their mode of reasoning and of writing, it is true, is in general better suited to readers of a higher class than to the lower ranks of men; but the principal and most striking arguments in each may easily be drawn out from the rest, may be cast into a more popular form, and brought down to the understandings of the common people. And if this, or any thing of a similar nature, was thrown into a regular course of sermons or lectures, and delivered in easy, intelligible, familiar language, to your respective congregations, I know nothing that would, in these philosophic times, render a more essential service to religion, or tend more to preserve the principles of those entrusted to your care, uncorrupted and unshaken by those most pernicious and dangerous publications, which I have too much reason to apprehend, will very soon be disseminated, with dreadful industry and activity, through every quarter of this island *.

But

* The apprehensions here expressed, have been since verified by the appearance of certain publications, the most offensive, and in some respects the most dangerous, that, perhaps, ever before insulted the religion of any christian country. I allude more particularly to the writings of

But besides all this, there is another argument for a steady adherence to our divine religion, both in principle and practice, which may, at this moment, be pressed with redoubled force on the attention of your hearers.

It

of Thomas Paine. It is true, that in point of composition and of argument, they are most contemptible; but the very meanness of their style, and the homeliness, the plainness, and the gross familiarity of their manner, are but too well adapted to the taste and apprehensions of those readers whom they are meant to captivate. This is a *new* species of infidel writing, very recently introduced among us. Hitherto we have had to contend only with the Tolands, the Tindals, the Bolingbrokes, and the Humes of the age; men, whose writings could fall only into the hands of a few in the higher ranks of life, and were not likely to make much impression on well-informed and well-cultivated minds. But the pieces to which I allude are addressed to the *multitude*, and are most dexterously brought down to the level of their understandings. They compress the whole poison of infidelity into the narrow compass of an essence or an extract, and render *irreligion easy* to the meanest capacity. They are, in short, most artful snares, laid for those numerous and valuable classes of men, who have hitherto escaped the contagion either of atheism or deism,—the mechanic, the manufacturer, the tradesman, the farmer, the servant, the labourer. On these (to whom the subject is quite new, and who have neither time nor talents for examining questions of this nature) the bold assertions, the intrepid blasphemies, and coarse buffooneries, which

It has been uniformly and constantly maintained by the best writers, and by the greatest men in all ages, and in all nations, that without *some* religion, some acknowledgment of a Supreme Governor, and some public mode of testifying our dependence upon him, no civil

which constitute the whole merit and character of these productions, are perfectly well calculated to impose and to stand in the place of argument and proof. It was by small tracts of this sort, disseminated among the lower orders, in every part of France, that the great body of the people there was prepared for that most astonishing event (which, without such preparation, could never have been so suddenly and so generally brought about) the public renunciation of the christian faith. In order to produce the *very same* effect here, and to pave the way for a general apostasy from the gospel, by contaminating the principles, and shaking the faith of the inferior classes of the people, the same arts have been employed, the same little breviates of infidelity, have, to my knowledge, been published and dispersed with great activity, and at a considerable expense, among the middling and lower ranks of men in this country. It behoves, therefore, every minister of the gospel who has the honour of his Divine Master, and the interests of his religion at heart, to *watch most carefully* the progress of such pestilential writings; which though perhaps not much known, or talked of in public, may be *secretly* and *silently* undermining the foundations of religion, and weakening its hold on the public mind, at a time when we stand most in need of its aid and support.

civil union, no political community, no form of government, could long subsist. This position has been supported by arguments unanswered and unanswerable; and the invariable practice of all the great legislators in the world, who have constantly made religion a component and essential part of their new institutions, has been always appealed to as a proof of the universal opinion of all wise men on this subject. It has also been affirmed, and has been found by actual experience to be true, that of all the religions that have ever yet appeared in the world, none were ever so well adapted to promote the welfare of society, and the great ends of civil government, as the christian revelation; and that therefore it is the obvious interest, as well as the indispensable duty of every state, to support and encourage this religion, to the utmost of their power.

On the contrary, it has been asserted by those, who dignify themselves with the name of philosophers, that all this is nothing more than the language of priestcraft, bigotry, and superstition; that religion, especially the christian religion, instead of being an advantage,

tage, is a real incumbrance to the state, and has been productive of nothing but mischief, misery, and desolation; that the true ally, the true support of government, is PHILOSOPHY; that to this every improvement, every blessing we enjoy, in civil and social life, is entirely owing; and that if religion was proscribed, and philosophy substituted in its room, and advanced to a proper degree of pre-eminence, we should soon see a most astonishing and most happy change in the face of human affairs.

Here then is the great question, between CHRISTIANITY on the one hand, and PHILOSOPHY on the other. The parties are fairly at issue together, and the point in contest between them is the most interesting and the most important that can possibly engage the attention of mankind. It has so happened, that this contest has been decided, most completely decided in our own times, and under our own eyes. A new government has suddenly arisen in Europe; and this government had the courage to try an experiment at its very first outset, which has never once, since the beginning of time, been tried before.

fore. It actually tried to govern mankind without any religion at all; to make reason the only object of worship, and philosophy the only guide of life. What the consequences of this experiment have been we all know too well. I will not wound your ears, nor pain your hearts, with a recital of those scenes of complicated misery which this new system produced: nor need I recal to your minds those blessings which this country derives, and that unbounded humanity and benevolence which here continually flow, from a *contrary* system, from the doctrines and the precepts of our divine Master. I shall only observe, that never was any thing so complete and perfect as the TRIUMPH OF RELIGION on this occasion, and that the question respecting the comparative utility, and the national importance of philosophy and of christianity, is now set at rest for ever.

Here then we have an advantage which none of our predecessors ever possessed, and which it will be our own fault if we do not press to the utmost. We have the advantage of proving, *by fact and by experiment*, by events passing immediately under our own observation

observation both at home and abroad, this most important truth; that the christian religion is, in the highest degree, conducive to the prosperity of the state; and that whenever it is publicly and generally renounced, that moment the peace, the order, the comfort, the security of civil government are for ever gone, and a door is opened to the admission of every thing most dreadful to human nature, and most destructive to human happiness.

A proof so obvious and so demonstrative as this cannot fail to operate most forcibly on the minds of men, cannot fail to convince them, more than a thousand speculative arguments, that by a firm belief in the divine truths of the gospel, and a uniform obedience to its laws, they are not only promoting their own individual happiness here, and hereafter, but are doing the most essential service to THE STATE; and that therefore they are bound by the most sacred ties, public as well as private, to cultivate every christian grace and virtue; as the surest test of a genuine love of their country, and as the only certain security against those terrible calamities and evils, which a rejection of the gospel, and a

violation

violation of its most sacred commands never fail to bring along with them.

Upon the whole, my brethren, the present times and the present scene of things, in almost every part of the civilized world, are the most interesting and the most awful that were ever before presented to the inhabitants of the earth; and such as must necessarily excite the most serious reflections in every thinking mind. Perhaps all those singular events to which we have been witnesses, unparalleled as they undoubtedly are in the page of history, may be only the *beginning* of things, may be only the first leading steps to a train of events still more extraordinary; to the accomplishment possibly of some new and unexpected, and at present unfathomable, designs hitherto reserved and hid in the counsels of the Almighty. Some we know there are who think that certain prophecies, both in the New Testament and the Old, are now fulfilling; that the *signs of the times* are portentous and alarming; and that the sudden extinction of a great monarchy, and of all the splendid ranks and orders of men that supported it, is only the completion in part of that prediction in the gospel, that

that "the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven;" before the second appearance of the Messiah, to judge the earth; all which expressions are well known to be only figurative emblems of the great powers and rulers of the world, whose destruction, it is said, is to precede that great event. As to myself I pretend not to decide on these arduous points; I pretend not either to prophesy or to interpret prophecy: nor shall I take upon myself to pronounce, whether we are now approaching (as some think) to the millennium or to the day of judgment, or to any other great and tremendous and universal change predicted in the sacred writings. But this I am sure of, that the present unexampled state of the christian world is a loud and a powerful call upon all men, but upon US above all men, to take peculiar heed to our ways, and to prepare ourselves, as well as those committed to our care, for every thing that may befal us, be it ever so novel, ever so calamitous. If in the midst of those clouds that gather round us we can sit perfectly tranquil and composed; if we can be altogether un-

concerned and indifferent to the indignities offered to our holy religion, and to the effects they may have on the minds of our own people; if in so critical a moment we can desert our proper stations, and plunge into the cares, the business, the pleasures, or the amusements of the world; if we can rest easy and satisfied *at a distance* from our parishioners, surrounded as we must see them to be with the most imminent danger to their souls, from which it is our bounden duty to protect them: above all, if instead of edifying and reforming others by the sanctity of our manners, and the purity of our conversation, we lead them by our own example into vice and irreligion, what a load of indignation are we treasuring up for ourselves against that solemn day when we must render an account of the sacred charge committed to us by our Almighty Judge! But cases such as these are, I trust, very rare among us indeed; and I can with difficulty bring myself to believe, that there is a single individual of our order (be his *general* character what it may) that does not feel the awful pressure of the present hour; that does not feel the powerful obligations it imposes on him

him to exert his utmost care and diligence in the discharge of all his sacred functions, and in an unremitted attention to all the spiritual wants and necessities of his people. There never was, I will venture to say, in the history of this island a single period in which the personal residence, and personal exertions of the parochial clergy were ever more wanted, or more anxiously looked up to, and expected and *demanded*, by the general voice of the whole nation, than at this moment; in order to fortify the faith and sanctify the manners of the great mass of the people; and to press upon them repeatedly and forcibly, those divine precepts of Holy Writ, which contain the best rules for every part of their conduct, private, public, political, and religious. It is to these exertions, my brethren, properly directed and prudently conducted, that we must principally owe that order, that quietness, that dutiful subjection to all lawful and constitutional authority which the Scriptures most peremptorily enjoin, and which are indispensably necessary to the security and stability of this and of every other government upon earth.

A

LETTER

TO

THE CLERGY

OF THE

DIOCESE OF LONDON,

ON THE

PROFANATION OF THE LORD'S DAY.

FULHAM, MAY 31, 1797.

Rev. Brethren,

HAVING, with great concern, observed that various profanations of the Sabbath have of late years been evidently gaining ground among us; so as to threaten a gradual desecration of that holy day, I must very earnestly request you to exert your utmost efforts within the precincts of the parishes that are committed to your care, to counteract, as much as possible, the progress of this alarming evil.

The

The profanations which I now allude to, are the travelling of stage-waggons and stage-coaches on the Lord's-day, the printing and dispersing of Sunday newspapers, the exercise of several worldly trades and occupations (among which some public breweries have, I am told, been noticed) and more particularly the practice which has within the last two or three years very much prevailed, of employing various labourers and workmen, such as carpenters, bricklayers, painters, &c. in repairing and erecting houses and other buildings on Sundays, as on the common days of the week.

All these, you must be sensible, are very gross violations of the rest and sanctity of the Sabbath; and I must therefore entreat you to keep a watchful eye on every thing of this nature in your own parish; and, if you see any attempt to introduce such dangerous innovations, you will, I trust, make every opposition to them in your power, and state the indecency and impiety of them, both in your public discourses and in private expostulations. I have myself found by experience in more cases than one, that a friendly representation of the extreme impropriety and mischief of such practices

practices made privately to the authors of them will sometimes have the desired effect. If, however, this should fail, you will then naturally have recourse in the first place to your churchwardens for their co-operation and assistance; and their exertions in the zealous execution of their office have, I know, been frequently attended with success. But if still higher authority be found necessary, application must be made to the magistrates of the district in which your parish is situated, for their concurrence and support.

Our ancestors have, as you well know, with no less wisdom than piety, made the religious observance of the Sunday a part of the law of the land, and have protected it by various statutes, which strictly prohibit, under certain penalties, the exercise of all worldly callings and occupations on that day; works of necessity and charity only excepted. And there are many excellent magistrates, both in the metropolis and in several other parts of this diocese, who will, I know, on your suggestion, be perfectly ready to enforce the due execution of these laws, and exert themselves with zeal

and with spirit in the suppression of those enormities which have been here pointed out.

You will, I am sure, agree with me in thinking, that if these and similar profanations of the christian Sabbath are suffered to gain ground and spread without controul, they would quickly counteract all the beneficial purposes of that divine institution, and produce a most fatal effect on the principles and morals of the people. It is, therefore, highly necessary to check these infringements of the ordinances of Heaven; and, at this moment more particularly, when we have peculiar need of the protection of the Almighty, it becomes, more than ever, our indispensable duty to resist with vigour every insult that is offered to Him and his religion, and to guard that day which is appropriated to his service, and which He claims as his own, from those daring encroachments which worldly men are continually making upon it, in defiance of common decency, and the most positive laws, both human and divine.

This kingdom has, from the period of the Reformation to this time, been distinguished among

among the nations of the christian world, for the solemnity, the decency, and the propriety with which the Lord's day has been here usually observed. It is a distinction which does us credit, and is altogether worthy of the first protestant church in Europe. I am therefore very seriously anxious that we should maintain inviolate this glorious pre-eminence; being perfectly convinced that the sacred day which both God and man have set apart for religious worship and rest, is the grand bulwark of christianity; and, that on the due application of it, to those important purposes, depends in a great measure the very existence of that religion in these realms.

I am,

Your affectionate brother,

B. LONDON.

A

CHARGE

DELIVERED TO

THE CLERGY

OF THE

DIOCESE OF LONDON,

IN THE YEAR 1803.

THE SIXTH EDITION.

CHARGE.

1803.

Reverend Brethren,

SINCE we last met in this place, we have enjoyed eighteen months of tranquillity and peace; and although we ought to be thankful to Providence even for that brief respite from the miseries and desolations of war, yet the free and unrestrained intercourse which it has of course produced between this island and foreign countries, has, I fear, in one respect been attended with consequences which we may have much reason to lament. What the state of society, of religion, and of morals is, in some parts of Europe, is no secret to any one; and it can hardly be supposed that such

multitudes

multitudes of our countrymen, especially of our *young* countrymen, as have for nearly the last two years resorted to the continent, can have entirely escaped the contagion of principles and manners, highly repugnant to the decency and sobriety of our national character, to those virtuous sentiments which have been early impressed upon our minds, and to those important duties, private, domestic, and public, which we have hitherto been accustomed to regard with reverence. Add to this, that many foreign publications of the most pernicious tendency have, during this interval of repose, found their way into this kingdom; and from one of them more particularly (which is a regular code and system of infidelity, much admired and applauded abroad) a short abstract has been made here, in order to bring it within the reach both of the pockets and the understanding of the middle and lower classes of the community, and to diffuse the miseries of impiety and irreligion as widely as possible through every part of this kingdom *.

Under

* The tract here alluded to (which I produced to the Clergy at my visitation, but which I do not think it

Under these circumstances, WE, my brethren, who are the appointed guardians of the morals and the religion of this country, are powerfully called upon to guard our people with the utmost care, not only against those irregularities which may be considered as the natural growth of our own climate, but against those exotic vices and systems of impiety, which there is too much reason to believe have been of late imported among us.

For this purpose we must not content ourselves with the discharge of our ordinary occupations, and our stated functions, but must enter with zeal and with ardour into all the various *private* duties of the pastoral care. More particularly, we must be careful to explain to our people, clearly and forcibly, the principal evidences on which the truth of our religion rests, the great fundamental doctrines of the christian faith, and all the various important precepts which it requires us to believe. All these we must press upon them with devout and solemn earnestness, and exert all

it expedient to name here) has passed through several editions; and it is remarkable that the larger work from which it was extracted, constituted the whole library of one of the rebels lately executed in Ireland.

all the powers and all the talents we are possessed of, in endeavouring to fortify their minds by every virtuous and every religious principle, against the many new temptations, both to apostasy from their faith, and to dissoluteness of manners, which may now possibly assail them. For all these meritorious services the public will principally look up to that most valuable and respectable body of men, the parochial Clergy of the church of England. And there can be no doubt but that their efforts to preserve the faith and the morals of their parishioners, if steadily persevered in, will, with the blessing of God, be finally successful. For it is inconceivable how much may be done in this way, how much vice and misery may be prevented, how much virtue and happiness may be produced, by a truly laborious, conscientious, exemplary clergyman, residing constantly on his benefice, whose great business and delight it is to advance the welfare and save the souls of his parishioners; who, like his blessed Master, goes about *doing good*, watching over his people with paternal tenderness and anxiety, conversing with them familiarly and affectionately,

tionately, instructing them carefully and assiduously in the ground and foundation of their faith in Christ, and in the doctrines of that truly apostolical church in which they have the happiness to be born and educated; impressing strongly on their minds all the various duties of their high and heavenly calling, rebuking the bold, impenitent offender, encouraging the humble and the penitent, seizing eagerly every opportunity that sickness or misfortune or affliction affords, of softening and subduing their hearts with the power of religion, and inspiring them with a resolution to repel with vigour every attempt that shall be made to seduce them from their belief in the gospel, and their allegiance to their heavenly Sovereign.

A conduct such as this, will, I am persuaded, be a sovereign antidote to the poison of that continental depravity which might otherwise diffuse itself over this island, and contaminate the minds and manners of its inhabitants.

But beside this, which is unquestionably our *principal* object, it will have another effect, of no small importance in the present times. It will tend greatly to check the progress of every

every species of enthusiasm, and to restrain those unjustifiable schisms and separations from the established church, which have of late been too much prevalent among us.

It is, I believe, a fact which admits of little doubt, that when the itinerant preacher goes forth upon his mission, he commonly looks out for those parishes where either the shepherd has entirely deserted his flock, and is employing or amusing himself elsewhere, or where he unfortunately pays so little attention to it, is so indolent, so lukewarm, so indifferent to its welfare, as to make it an easy prey to every bold invader. There that invader finds an easy access, and a welcome reception; and soon collects together a large number of proselytes. But, in general, he very prudently keeps aloof from those parishes where he sees a resident minister conducting himself in the manner I have above described; watching over his people with unremitting care; grounding them early in the rudiments of sound religion; guarding them carefully against the false glosses and dangerous delusions of illiterate and unauthorized teachers; bringing them to a constant attendance on divine worship in

their

their parish churches; and manifesting the same zeal, activity, and earnestness to restrain his people in the church of England, which he sees others exert to seduce them from it. Into parishes so constituted, the self-commissioned preacher seldom, if ever, enters; or, if he does, he rarely gains any permanent footing, any settled establishment in them*. He is in most cases forced to give way to the superior weight and influence of a regular, a learned, an exemplary, and a diligent pastor. This, then, is the true, the most effectual way, of counteracting the progress of schism and fanaticism. There are numbers, I am persuaded, here present, who can, from their own experience, and their own laudable exertions, bear testimony to the truth of this position: and whenever this remedy is *universally* applied, (as I hope and trust it gradually will) I do not hesitate to predict that the evil complained of will be considerably lessened, in some instances entirely subdued†.

Indeed, it would, I think, be degrading to the

* The reader will easily perceive, that some of these observations cannot, for obvious reasons, be strictly applied to the very populous parishes of London and its immediate vicinity.

† See note (A) in the Appendix, p. 324.

the honour and dignity of our ancient and venerable establishment, to suppose that a church founded on the gospel of Christ; cemented with the blood of its martyrs; constructed by some of the wisest, most learned, most pious, most eminent of men of that or almost any other period; a church which has stood the test of ages and the shock of persecution; which is the great bulwark of protestantism in Europe, the admiration of foreign nations, and the glory of our own; it would, I say, be paying but an ill compliment to such an establishment to suppose, that a church so constituted, and at the same time supported and protected by the state, can be shaken, or in any material degree injured, by the invectives or misrepresentations of *any* adversaries that we have to contend with. No, my brethren, let us think better of ourselves; let us be true to ourselves; let us make the best use of the vast advantages we possess; let us exert ourselves in our several stations with diligence, with vigour, with energy, and with perseverance, and we have nothing to fear*.

We

* See note (B) in the Appendix, p. 327.—It is with great satisfaction I can state, that the number of young

We have, indeed, in the present times, peculiar reason for cherishing and protecting our national church, and adhering to it with inviolable fidelity. We have seen, in more countries than one, the fatal consequences that have arisen to morals and to religion from the subversion of ancient religious institutions; from dissolving the natural connection between the church and the state; from depriving religion of all support from the public, and leaving it entirely to the pious zeal and spontaneous generosity of individuals.

About twenty years ago we were told, in a variety of publications, written by men of considerable talents, dissenting from the church of England, that all ecclesiastical establishments were unchristian and pernicious things; that they were a check to all liberality of opinion, all freedom of inquiry, and hurtful to the interests of morality and religion.

persons confirmed in the course of my last visitation in 1803, exceeds that of any former one; a circumstance which affords, I think, a fair presumption that (in the diocese of London at least) the members of the church of England are not diminished in their numbers, and have not lost any thing of their accustomed reverence for the solemn ordinances of the church to which they belong.

religion. It was contended, that if we could once see a great nation emancipated from these fetters upon the conscience and the understanding; if we could see it nobly extricating religion from all connection with the state; refusing all support to any favourite communion, any privileged church; shewing no kind of distinction whatever to any one sect of christians, but leaving them all to provide for themselves as well as they could; we should soon see the happy effects of such a generous and rational system; we should see such a scene of liberty, of peace, of harmony, of virtue, of happiness, of pure morality, and genuine religion, as was never before witnessed in the world.

It has so happened, my brethren, that this so much wished for experiment has actually been tried; it has been tried in our own times in two great countries, in the republic of America, and in the republic of France. In the former, most of the ecclesiastical establishments which subsisted in the southern provinces have been destroyed; all public provision and protection withdrawn from the church of England: and the episcopal clergy left principally

to the eleemosynary contributions of their congregations. And what has been the consequence? Has religion obtained a more powerful and more extensive influence over the inhabitants of those states? Are their churches better frequented, their morals improved, and (as we were taught to expect) piety, virtue, and happiness, diffused universally throughout the land? No one, I apprehend, who is well acquainted with the present state of that country, will affirm this to be the case. Had so propitious and so remarkable a change taken place, it would scarcely have escaped the notice of so many travellers as have lately visited that continent, much less the observation of their own writers, who would very naturally have dwelt with no small degree of triumph and exultation on a circumstance so honourable to their native land. But nothing of this sort has, I believe, as yet appeared. On the contrary, we are told by a writer of credit, who lately travelled over a considerable part of that country, that in one of the southern provinces, where the ecclesiastical establishment has been destroyed, "many of the churches are falling into decay; and in

one of the principal towns divine service is not performed more than once in two or three weeks; that very little regard is paid by the people in general to Sunday; and scarcely any sense of religion left upon their minds*."

If we now turn our eyes to France, the facts are still more striking, and the conclusion arising from them becomes infinitely more forcible.

In the convulsions which so long agitated that wretched country, the ancient religious establishment, as well as the ancient government of the kingdom, were completely swept away, and involved in one common ruin. Did this produce in the smallest degree a purer mode of religion, or a purer system of morals? It ended, as we all know, in such a depravation of both as is not to be paralleled in the annals of any other christian country. And so sensible were the governing people of that country themselves of the fatal mischiefs arising from the annihilation of the national religion, that to prevent the total dissolution of all those bonds that unite men together in social order

* See Weld's Travels through the States of North America, vol. i. p. 177.

and

and civil subordination, and the utter extinction of every principle of virtue, honour, and common honesty, they found it indispensably necessary to restore the religious establishment of their ancestors in some degree to its ancient state.

Here then we have two instances directly in point; we have two irresistible proofs of the necessity of a religion united with and protected and supported by the state. We have it demonstrated to us not merely by reason, by argument, by abstract theory, but by actual experiment, that all the fine things promised to us, and all the flattering prospects held out to us of I know not what improvements in virtue and religion, if we would consent to dissolve the present connection between the government and the religion of this country, and throw down all the barriers of our legal ecclesiastical establishment, are mere visionary imaginations and romantic projects; and that it is our wisdom, our duty, and our interest to adhere steadily in this, as in most other instances, to the sage and venerable institutions of our ancestors. Taught, then, by the experience of other countries, as well as

by our own, let us learn to appreciate as we ought the many solid advantages resulting to morality and religion, from a well-constituted national church. And let us at the same time manifest our gratitude to the government that protects us, by an inviolable attachment to it; by exerting ourselves in our several stations to maintain and support it to the utmost of our power; and by diffusing as far as we are able, a spirit of loyalty to our gracious sovereign, of obedience to the laws, of love and reverence for our unrivalled constitution, among all those who are committed to our care.

Of all this indeed, we have already given the most substantial proofs, in those perilous times when the state was in the utmost danger, and stood in need of the cordial assistance and support of all its friends*. In that important and arduous conflict in which our ALL was at stake, when we were surrounded by a most formidable host of enemies without, and in hourly apprehensions from the insidious machinations of perfidious traitors within, in

* In the conclusion of the year 1792, and during the whole of the last war.

that

that awful moment the conduct of the clergy of the church of England was such as, I trust, will never be forgotten. It was firm, steady, loyal, active, zealous in support of the constitution. They bore with patience and with magnanimity, the heavy burthens which the exigencies of the state rendered absolutely necessary, but which fell with peculiar weight on those among them of slender incomes and large families: and far from murmuring or repining, or expressing any discontent, they manifested the utmost earnestness and alacrity in serving their country in every way consistent with the sanctity of their profession; using at the same time their best endeavours, by their discourses, their conversation, their writings, and their example, to excite a similar spirit of patriotism in the minds of all their parishioners. And when it is considered that the whole kingdom is divided into certain districts called parishes, which are all under the spiritual direction of their respective pastors, who have, or may have, a constant intercourse and communication with them, both in public and in private; it is not going too far to say, that the united efforts of such a body of men,

of

of such talents and such opportunities, exerting all their powers and all their influence in support of the constitution, contributed more to preserve the people from the poison of those pestilential principles which were so industriously disseminated among them, and to keep them firm and steady in their duty and their allegiance, than perhaps any other class of men in the kingdom*. These are services certainly of the highest importance, and cannot fail to secure to the clergy of the church of England the protection of that government to which they have shewn themselves so warmly attached, and even to render it disposed to extend such further assistance to them as their circumstances may require.

At the same time it will be naturally expected, both by our rulers and by the country at large, that we should make a suitable return for their kindness and liberality towards us,

* There can be no doubt, but that, in the present awful crisis of the kingdom, the conduct of the clergy will be the same as in the times above alluded to. Indeed, several excellent publications from their pens have already appeared, tending to animate their parishioners to a manly and vigorous defence of their native land, their laws, their liberties, and their religion.

us, by a redoubled attention to all the important duties of our profession; and more especially to that which must be the foundation of them all, and without which scarcely any one of those duties can be effectually performed, *personal residence upon our cures.* This great question is now before the legislature; and to their wisdom and justice we must leave the decision of it. Whatever that may be, *you*, my Brethren, will, I am persuaded, be at perfect ease upon the subject; because, I trust, and have good reason to believe, that you are in the habit of being influenced by higher and nobler motives than those of a constrained obedience to human laws, and the fear of penal statutes. You look beyond them to far more sacred obligations; to conscience, to duty; to the injunctions of your divine Master; to the everlasting welfare of the people committed to your charge; and, above all, to that awful day when you must give an account of your stewardship. That you *are* actuated by considerations such as these I think myself warranted to infer, from that readiness which you have always manifested to comply with any regulations I have judged

it

it necessary to make, more particularly in the article of residence; which has, I confess, always been an object near to my heart. And in this I have been gratified, if not to the full extent of my wishes, yet certainly to a degree which is very consolatory to my mind; and which enables me to say with truth, that since my accession to this see, and even since the period of my last visitation, the number of resident incumbents has been materially increased.

It is a singular satisfaction to me to have received from various parts of my diocese, the most favourable accounts of the effects produced by the Sunday schools lately established there. I am assured that they have wrought a visible and a happy change in the manners and morals, not only of the rising but of the present existing generation. In some places, from a state little short of pagan ignorance and irreligion, both the young and the old have acquired habits of morality, industry, and piety; and churches, which before were almost deserted, are now crowded with hearers and with communicants.

These flattering accounts strongly confirm the

the good opinion I have long entertained of these institutions, founded on the experience I had of their beneficial influence in a former diocese, more extensive and not much less populous than even this. At the same time, I am perfectly aware of the prejudices which have of late prevailed respecting schools of this sort, and the various objections that have been urged against them.

The principal one, and, indeed, the only one that merits notice is, that they are sometimes perverted into nurseries of disaffection and enthusiasm, and thus become dangerous instruments in the hands of those who are enemies to the constitution both in church and state. If the fact be so, instead of being an objection to Sunday schools *rightly constituted and well conducted*, it appears to me a very powerful argument in their favour. For if such schools are placed (as they always ought to be) under the direction and control of the parochial clergy; if no teachers are admitted, no books introduced into them, but such as *they* entirely approve; if the education of the children is confined, as strictly as possible, to the knowledge of the Bible, the common

common prayer book, and the catechism of the church of England; and if they are accustomed to attend divine service in their parish churches constantly every Sunday, both morning and afternoon; *such* schools, so conducted, I scruple not to say, will be the best possible antidotes to seminaries of a complexion hostile to the church of England; which, without such regular and well-ordered institutions on our part to counteract their influence, would probably multiply upon us to an alarming degree. If, however, any better and safer, and cheaper mode of instructing the poor than that of Sunday schools can be devised, I, for one, shall most readily adopt it. But in the meanwhile, the great advantage of these schools is, that they educate the largest number at the smallest expense, and thus become most useful appendages and auxiliaries to our charity schools, which are too expensive to be very generally and very extensively useful. But, be this as it may, all I mean to contend for here is, that in *some way or other*, in Sunday schools, in charity schools, in day schools, in schools of industry, or whatever species of school you think fit, the

the children of the poor *ought to be educated.* I mean to controvert that doctrine, which has of late been maintained by men of considerable ability, that the *lower classes of the people ought not to be educated at all;* and that it is safest both for the government and the religion of this country, to let them remain in that state of ignorance in which nature has originally placed them.

To enter at large into this very important question, would trespass far too much on your time and patience. I shall therefore content myself with stating a single fact, which seems to me conclusive on this subject.

In order to see, in the clearest light, the different effects of ignorance and of right education on the lower classes of the people, we have only to recollect what passed during the late war in the two islands which constitute this united kingdom. In one of these, it is well known that the ignorance and superstition of the peasants and the labourers are scarcely to be equalled in any other civilized country in Europe. It is a fact ascertained by the most diligent and accurate inquiries, lately set on foot in that island, that even in the most

most enlightened part of it, not above one third of the people receive any education at all; and throughout the rest of the island, not a twentieth part have even learned their alphabet*. This is a degree of ignorance which carries back our thoughts to the ages of Gothic barbarism, and was scarcely to be expected in what we call these enlightened days. It is Egyptian darkness; darkness that may be felt. And what has been the consequence of it? Such scenes of wanton cruelty and savage ferocity as exceed all power of description, and ought, indeed, rather to be buried in everlasting oblivion. I shall only, therefore, say, in the words of the prophet, that the common people of that island were "destroyed for *lack of knowledge*†." "Their understandings were darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that was in them‡."

Let us now turn our eyes to our own island,

* For this fact, as well as for several useful observations on the subject before us, I am obliged to an admirable sermon, preached by Mr. Dunn before Lord Hardwicke and the Association at Dublin for discountenancing Vice, &c. and deservedly honoured with their warmest approbation.

† Hosea iv. 6. ‡ Ephes. iv. 18.

and

and see what was the conduct of the common people of this country at the same period of time, and under the same incitements to disaffection and infidelity. They were at first, indeed, staggered, and for a while imposed upon, by those bold, licentious principles which the partisans of the French revolution propagated with so much industry through the kingdom. But they soon recovered from this delirium; they saw through the wicked artifices of the abettors of anarchy and irreligion. They saw the frightful dangers that surrounded them; prepared to meet them with vigour, and actually repelled them with success. And what was the occasion of this happy change? It was, because the higher orders of the community could write, and the inferior orders could read. It was, because, for more than twenty years before, upwards of three hundred thousand children of the poor had been religiously educated in the various charity schools and Sunday schools of this kingdom, and were thus made *capable* of reading and comprehending those admirable discourses, sermons, and tracts of various kinds, which the ablest and most virtuous persons,

both among the clergy and the laity of this kingdom, were employed in composing for the lowest classes of the people, in bringing them down to the level of their understandings, and in making "so forcible an appeal, not to the *ignorance*, but to the *knowledge* of their countrymen," that they became sensible of the perils that surrounded them, and were rescued from destruction. This, I am convinced, was, under Providence, the principal instrument of the preservation of this country, in the political as well as the religious sense of that word. And after this most apposite, and recent, and striking example of the different effects of ignorance and of information among the common people in two islands so closely bordering on each other, an example passing before our own eyes, and forcing itself on our observation, no one, I trust, will hereafter be disposed to expatiate on the benefits of ignorance, and the dangers of education in the lower ranks of the community.

It has, I know, been sometimes asserted that ignorance is the mother of devotion. It is no such thing. It is the mother of superstition, of bigotry, of fanaticism, of disaffection, of

of cruelty, and of rebellion. These are its legitimate children. It has never yet produced any other; and never will to the end of the world. And we may lay this down as an incontestible truth, that a well-informed and intelligent people, more particularly a people well acquainted with the sacred writings, will always be more orderly, more decent, more humane, more virtuous, more religious, more obedient to their superiors, than a people totally devoid of all instruction and all education.

I have said thus much on the expediency and the necessity of giving a certain degree of education to the poor, and of training them up early in the paths of morality and religion, because it appears to me a duty of the very last importance to the welfare of the state, and to the security and stability of that church to which we have the good fortune to belong. The great mass of the people form the broad base of the pyramid of our civil and ecclesiastical constitution, and it is therefore essentially necessary that this foundation should be made firm and secure, and well compacted together by those sound principles of virtue

and religion, which are the strongest cement of civil society, and the chief support of national happiness and prosperity. To this, therefore, let us bend all the energy and activity of our minds; for we cannot do a more substantial service both to the poor themselves and to the community at large. It is indeed a *public* concern, and if it could not be otherwise provided for, government itself (as many ancient governments have done) ought to take it into their own hands*. But fortunately for us, the benevolence of individuals has made ample provision for the education of the poor in various ways and by various charitable institutions; and it is *our* duty, my brethren, our *professional* duty, to cherish and keep alive this spirit in its utmost vigour, and to give it every possible encouragement and support by our own personal exertions. Our divine Master came, as he himself tells us, to preach the gospel to the poor, and we are

* It is a remarkable fact, and much to our present purpose, that in the only two countries (Scotland and Switzerland) where there have been *national establishments* for the education of the lower classes, the number of criminals has been uncommonly small. See the Sermon above mentioned, p. 21.

under

under the most sacred obligation to follow his example in every way we can; and not only to preach to the poor, but to train them up in the way of righteousness from their very infancy. For surely our Lord, who manifested on several occasions so strong an affection for children, could never mean that the children of that very class of men to whom he came peculiarly to preach the gospel, should be left destitute of all instruction in that very gospel. His intention unquestionably must have been, what is distinctly expressed by one of his apostles, that *they* (as well as all other christian children) should be "brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord *." This is an argument for our attention to the education of the lower classes, which overbears all reasoning and all objections to the contrary. It is a duty imposed upon us by our religion; and the injunctions of that religion (let the world say what it will) we *must* obey. The mode of doing it must be a matter of judgment and of discretion. That mode which diffuses the benefit to the widest extent and at the smallest expense, seems to deserve

* Ephes. vi. 4.

the preference; but as I before observed, and must again repeat, *in some way or other*, in that way which experience proves to be the best, the inferior orders of the people must be educated and instructed. Otherwise there is too much reason to fear, that "through the blindness of their hearts*," they will be seduced by artful and wicked men to apply their vast strength to the destruction of their country, to lay hold on the pillars of the constitution, and pull down the whole goodly fabric over our heads.

I have now stated to you what appeared to me most worthy of your attention, and most necessary at the present moment. And as at my advanced period of life, I dare scarcely indulge the hope of being permitted to meet you again in this place, I was anxious to take this opportunity of collecting into one view, and pressing upon your most serious consideration, every thing that presented itself to my mind, as most conducive to your real credit and welfare, to the best interests of the church of England, and to the general diffusion of sound morality and genuine piety

* Ephes. iv. 18.

and

and religion throughout the great mass of the people of this land. What I have here offered to your thoughts, I do in my best judgment, after the most mature consideration and the experience of a long life, most conscientiously believe to be well calculated for those important purposes; and I entreat you to receive it as the advice of one who can now have no other possible view in this world but that of discharging the various duties incumbent on him (more especially those which he owes to you) to the best of those abilities which God has given him. And it will be my last and most fervent prayer to Heaven, that both you and I may be well prepared for that most awful account which we must all of us give of the sacred and important trust reposed in us, at the tribunal of our Almighty Judge.

APPENDIX.

CONTAINING

ADDITIONAL NOTES.

Note (A.)

Among the erroneous doctrines inculcated by irregular, self-appointed teachers in their conventicles, the peculiar tenets of the Calvinistic school are said to be most predominant, and to have been attended sometimes with very fatal consequences*. But these have been of late so fully discussed, and in my apprehension so clearly proved by many able writers to be neither consonant to Scripture, nor to the genuine doctrines of the church of England (collected from her articles, her homilies, and her admirable liturgy compared together) that there is, I trust, no great danger of their making any further progress

* See the very curious and authentic Report of the Lincolnshire Clergy, pp. 11, 12, concerning the state of religion in their district.

among

among us. See more particularly the bishop of Lincoln's vindication of the important doctrine of UNIVERSAL REDEMPTION in his last charge to his clergy; which appears to me a model of temperate discussion and luminous explanation.

Indeed, in all cases where religious errors are to be confuted, *temperate discussion*, in the true spirit of christian charity, is the mode we ought invariably to pursue; without giving way to any personal invective, any asperity, either of language or of conduct, towards those who have the misfortune to differ from us in opinion. These things are totally unbecoming a minister of the gospel, who is expressly enjoined by his religion "to put away all bitterness, anger, malice, and evil-speaking; even when he is reviled, not to revile again; but to be gentle unto all men, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves*."

In perfect conformity with these truly divine precepts are the directions given us by one of the most distinguished ornaments of the primacy of this realm, archbishop Secker; than whom the church of England never had

* Ephes. iv. 31. 1 Pet. ii. 23. 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

a more

a more zealous friend or more able advocate*. "It is not," says he (alluding to the very sectaries of whom we have been speaking) "It is not rendering them railing for railing†;" it is not ridiculing them (especially in terms bordering on profaneness) or affecting more gravely to treat them with contempt; it is not doing them the honour of miscalling other persons of more than ordinary seriousness by their names, that will prevent the continuance or increase of the harm they are doing‡. The only way is, for the clergy to imitate and emulate what is good in them, avoiding what is bad; to attend their cures; edify their parishioners with awakening, but rational and scriptural discourses; to converse much with them, "as watchmen for their souls; to be sober, grave, temperate, and shew themselves in all things patterns of good works§."—They should recommend themselves

* See more particularly his Lectures on the Church Catechism, his masterly Explanation and Defence of the Liturgy, and several of his other works.

† 1 Pet. iii. 9.

‡ Alluding to some publications of those times, which were meant to check the growth of Methodism; but which, as the archbishop here predicts, and for the reasons he here assigns, completely failed of producing that effect.

§ Heb. xiii. 17. Tit. i. 8. Ibid. ii. 7.

to

to their adversaries by their mildness, their seriousness, their diligence; yet beware, and counsel others to beware, of being led, by esteem of their piety, into relishing their singularities and patronizing their schism." See Secker's First Charge to the Clergy of the Diocese of Canterbury, p. 233—236, and Second Charge, p. 279—283; the whole of which Charges, as well as of the *Oratio Synodalis* subjoined to them, I earnestly recommend to the serious consideration of the clergy of this diocese.

Note (B.)

The same excellent prelate who is mentioned in the preceding note, after having given similar advice to his clergy, subjoins the following eloquent and affecting apology for himself; in the sentiments of which, and more especially in the very interesting conclusion of it, I most cordially concur: "Egone igitur clerum Anglicanum officii, vel male intellecti, vel male præstiti tecte insimulo? Deus meliora! quî potest ut vituperem quos diligo et revereor; quorum plurimorum cùm vitâ functorum

tùm

tùm superstitum amicitiâ diu gavisus sum; et exempla mihi quotidie ob oculos pono, ut ad recte vivendum docendumque me erigam et confirmem? Sed vos auditoribus vestris, etiamsi summâ laude dignis, monitiones tamen solicite ingeritis. Nam vel sapientes virgines dormitâsse legimus; thesaurum evangelicum in vasis fictilibus habemus; et difficile est a moribus hodiernis aliquid contagionis et labis non trahere.—Ignoscat Pater misericors, quod parœciis primo, deinde diœcesibus mihi ordine commissis minus intente et perite quam oportuerat invigilaverim! Ignoscat pariter, si quid simile cuiquam vestrûm contigerit! Illud autem statuamus universi, aucto solicite studio, compensare pro virili (nunquam enim fiet satis) quicquid peccavimus." Secker's *Oratio Synodalis*, p. 371.

A LET-

A

LETTER

TO

THE CLERGY

OF THE

DIOCESE OF LONDON,

ON THE

NEGLECT OF KNEELING AT CHURCH

WHERE THE LITURGY DIRECTS IT.

Reverend Brethren,

I HAVE judged it expedient to address you on a subject which may not perhaps have hitherto attracted your observation, but which appears to me, as I hope it will to you, after you have perused this Letter, well worthy of your most serious attention.

For many years past I have observed with extreme concern, in different churches and chapels, both in the metropolis and in various parts of the country where I happened to be

 present,

present, a practice prevailing (and evidently gaining ground every day) of a considerable part of the congregation SITTING during those parts of divine worship where the rubric expressly enjoins every one to KNEEL. It may be thought, perhaps, that the posture of the body in offering up our prayers, is a circumstance too trivial to deserve such serious notice as this. But can any thing be trivial that relates to the Almighty Governor of the universe? Does not every one know too, that the mind and the body mutually act upon, and influence each other, and that a negligent attitude of the one will naturally produce indifference and inattention in the other? Look only at the *general* deportment of those who *sit* at their devotions (without being compelled to it by necessity) and then say whether this remark is not founded in truth and in fact. Let me appeal to every man addicted to this practice; let me ask him whether if he found it necessary to request a favour from any earthly sovereign, or even from any superior whatever, he would prefer his petition in the attitude of *sitting?* Common decency, common usage, and common sense revolt at the very

very idea of such a thing. And are we then to treat the great Lord of all with less ceremony and less respect than we should observe towards a fellow-creature in any degree superior to us? No one, I think, can seriously maintain so monstrous a doctrine as this. Consider too, for a moment, what it is we are asking in our prayers? Nothing less than the supply of our daily wants, the pardon of our daily sins, protection from danger, support under affliction, the comforts and conveniencies of the present life, and everlasting felicity in the life to come. And are these such trivial, such contemptible things, that we may ask them perfectly at our ease, and in the very same indolent and familiar attitude in which we should hold a conversation with a friend on the news of the day, or view a public spectacle for the amusement of the moment? I shall be told, perhaps, that there are some denominations of christians that *stand*, and others that *sit* at their devotions. It is very true; and they must be left to judge for themselves; but my concern at present is not either with any particular description of christians in foreign countries, or with any particular

sectaries in this; but with members of the church established by law in these realms. That church, in her admirable form of public prayer, allows in different parts of the service the different postures both of *standing* and *sitting;* which, with its usual wisdom and discretion, it adapts to the respective circumstances of those particular parts. But where the solemnity and importance of our supplications require it, there it positively enjoins the posture of *kneeling;* and to disobey that injunction is unquestionably an offence against the discipline and usage of that venerable church to which we have the happiness to belong.

It is also contrary to the practice of the best, and greatest, and wisest men, both before the promulgation of the gospel, and after it. The exhortation of king David in the 95th Psalm, which we have adopted into our liturgy, is, " O come let us worship and fall down, and *kneel* before the Lord our Maker." When Solomon dedicated his magnificent temple to God, he kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands towards heaven, while

he

he poured forth one of the most sublime and affecting prayers that ever fell from the lips of man. It was the custom of the prophet Daniel to kneel upon his knees three times a day, and pray and give thanks unto his God. Our Saviour himself in his last agony kneeled down and prayed; St. Stephen in his last moments kneeled down and prayed for his murderers; and St. Paul, when he took his last solemn leave of his brethren, kneeled down even on the sea shore, and offered up his petitions to heaven for their everlasting welfare.

After these injunctions of the church, and these examples from Scripture, no one I think who calls himself a christian, and a member of the church of England, will (unless prevented by illness or infirmity, where the necessity of the case most evidently gives a claim to indulgence) refuse *to kneel down* before the Lord his Maker. But if you perceive any part of your congregation habitually neglecting to do so, I must request you to represent to them in forcible terms, the great impropriety and indecency of such a practice. It is very possible they may have fallen into

it from mere thoughtlessness and inattention, and considered it as a matter of very little importance; but you will, I hope, endeavour to convince them that it is in reality a very serious offence against the Majesty of Heaven, and the decorum and solemnity of divine worship. It is evidently inconsistent with that profound reverence which is due to the great Creator of the universe, and that deep humility and contrition which become such wretched sinners as we all are (in a greater or less degree) in the sight of God. It strikes, in short, in my apprehension, at the very root of all true devotion, and ought therefore to be vigorously resisted before it has gained too much strength to be subdued. If it is not, if it is suffered to go on without control, there is too much reason to apprehend, from the progress it has made within these few years, that it will in a few years more become a universal practice, and that you will see the whole of your congregation *sitting* during every part of divine service.

I must therefore request, that you will use your best endeavours, both in private conversation and in your public discourses, to repress in

in time the further prevalence of so indecorous a custom. And I must particularly direct your attention to the schools in your parishes for the youth of either sex, in some of which, this practice has I fear been not only connived at, but permitted, if not encouraged.

The considerations here suggested, with many others of a similar nature, which will, I doubt not, occur to your own minds, can hardly fail, if urged with proper force, to make a deep impression on the minds of your hearers. But that impression may be greatly aided at this moment, by recalling to their thoughts the present awful situation of this country, and the tremendous dangers with which we are now surrounded. To repel these dangers, the noblest and most vigorous exertions have been made by our gallant countrymen, and those exertions will I trust be attended with success. But after all that human power can effect, our chief dependence must at last be on the defence of the Most High. That defence can only be obtained by the effectual reformation of our hearts and lives, and by earnest and frequent prayer.

And

And if any one can at such a time betray any symptoms of lukewarmness and indifference in his exterior deportment, when he ought to be imploring the protection of Heaven for every thing that is dear to him, with every external mark as well as every internal sentiment of the sincerest devotion, it must argue such a want of feeling for his country, as well as reverence towards his Maker, as I hope will very seldom occur either in your congregations, or in any other in this united kingdom.

I am,

Your affectionate

Friend and Brother,

B. LONDON.

LONDON HOUSE,
May 4th, 1804.

THE

BENEFICIAL EFFECTS

OF

CHRISTIANITY

ON THE

TEMPORAL CONCERNS OF MANKIND,

PROVED FROM

HISTORY AND FROM FACTS.

EIGHTH EDITION.

EDITIONS

REFERRED TO IN THE FOLLOWING ESSAY.

Aristotelis Opera.—Aurel. Allobr. 1605.

Platonis Op.—Frankfort, 1549.

Herodoti Op.—Lugd. Bat. 1716.

Thucyd. Op.—Frankfort, 1594.

Taciti Op.—Ernest. 1752.

Senecæ Op.—Leips. 1615.

Cicero Olivet.—Genev. 1743.

Livy Crevier. 12°—1750.

SECTION I.

THERE are few arguments against the truth and divine origin of the Christian Revelation, on which the Adversaries of our Faith more frequently and more vehemently declaim, than that spirit of cruelty and intolerance, which they contend is its distinguishing feature, and the endless massacres, wars and persecutions, with which (they affirm) that spirit has desolated the Christian world.

That too many of the professors of our Religion, have, by their intemperate and inhuman conduct, brought reproach upon the Gospel, and extreme misery upon their fellow-creatures, is, it must be confessed, unquestionably true; but it is no less true that others ought to bear a large share of that odium, which is generally thrown exclusively on the disciples of Christ, and that it is not Christianity but human nature, that is chargeable with the guilt of persecution. It is beyond

yond a doubt, that a large part of those bitter dissensions and sanguinary contests which have been usually styled religious, and with the entire guilt of which Christianity has been very unjustly loaded, were altogether, or at least in a great measure, owing to political causes; and that difference of opinion in matters of faith has much oftener been the ostensible, than the real cause of those calamities which have been ascribed to it. But allowing it to have been in some cases the real cause, still the Gospel itself stands perfectly clear of all blame on that account. Whatever mischief persecution has done in the world, (and it has God knows done full enough,) it was not Christ, but some mistaken followers of Christ, that brought this sword upon earth; and it would be as injurious to ascribe to Christianity the false opinions and wrong practices of its disciples, however pernicious, as to impute to the physician the fatal mistakes of those who administered his medicines. The very best laws are liable to be misinterpreted and perverted. It was the fate of the Evangelical law to be so. Its spirit was misunderstood, and its pre-

cepts misapplied by some of its avowed friends, and its authority made use of as a cloak for ambition, resentment, cruelty and oppression, by some of its secret enemies. But the Gospel all the while was guiltless of this blood. It disclaimed and abhorred such unnatural supports, which it was as far from wanting, as it was from prescribing. It authorized the use of no other means of conviction, but gentleness and persuasion; and if any of its disciples have, by a misguided zeal, been betrayed into violent and sanguinary measures, the blame is all their own; and it is they must answer for it, not Jesus or his Religion*.

But this is not all. The defence of our divine Religion against the charge of cruelty, must by no means rest here. We contend not only that it has never been the real source of any misery upon earth, but that, on the contrary, it has added most essentially to the sum of human happiness; that it is not only in its own nature calculated to promote the peace, the welfare and the comfort of man-

* To impute *crimes* to Christianity, says the celebrated king of Prussia (in his Posthumous Works) is the act of a *novice*. His word may fairly be taken for such an assertion.

kind,

kind, but that it has actually done so; that its beneficial effects are in a greater or a less degree visible throughout the Christian world; and that, considered in all the various points of view in which it presents itself to our observation, and in all its different bearings on the several conditions and relations of human life, it appears evidently to be the greatest and most substantial blessing, even in the present state, that Heaven in its bounty ever conferred upon the sons of men.

In order to establish the truth of these assertions, I must beg the reader's attention to the following plain statement of facts, which the most determined and most ingenious adversary of the Gospel will not, I apprehend, find it very easy to controvert*.

* It was not till after this essay was finished, that I had the good fortune to meet with Dr. Valpy's two discourses on this subject; and it is a great satisfaction to me to find that we not only concur in our general sentiments upon it, but in several of the authorities which we cite from ancient authors, in support of our argument. This circumstance affords me an opportunity, which I gladly embrace, of recommending to the notice of my readers those two excellent discourses, which are replete with learning, ingenuity and judicious remarks, on a variety of interesting and important subjects.

I. It

I. It is on all hands admitted, that from our domestic relations flows a very large proportion of the misery or the comfort of human life. Among these, the first in order, and from which the others take their rise, is the state of MARRIAGE. And here Christianity first displays its beneficent spirit.

The two great banes of connubial happiness among the ancient Pagans were polygamy and divorce. The first of these, it is well known, prevailed, and does at this hour prevail, through almost every region of the eastern world. The other was allowed for the most trivial causes, and exercised with the most wanton cruelty, in the later ages of Rome, not only by the worthless and the profligate, but by some of the most distinguished characters in the republic*: and both of them evidently tended to destroy that mutual confidence, harmony and affection, that constant union of interests and of sentiments, which constitute the supreme felicity of the matrimonial state. Besides this, the treatment of married women in general, among the ancients, was harsh, ungenerous and unjust.

* See Appendix, note (a).

And

And at this day (for the spirit of paganism is at all times, and in all places, the same) the savages of North America, as well as those of the new discovered islands in the South Seas, consider their wives as little better than slaves and beasts of burthen, and use them accordingly.

To all these cruelties Christianity (wherever it is received and professed with any degree of purity) has put an effectual stop. It has entirely cut off that grand source of domestic wretchedness, polygamy; and has confined the dangerous liberty of divorce to one only cause, (the only cause that can justify the dissolution of so strict and sacred a bond,) viz. an absolute violation of the first and fundamental condition of the marriage contract, fidelity to the marriage bed*. It has provided no less for the security and comfort of the weaker

* The Historian of *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, has been pleased to observe, (vol. iv. p. 380.) that "the ambiguous word which contains the precept "of Christ respecting divorce is flexible to any interpre-"tation that the wisdom of a legislator can demand, and "that the proper meaning of the original word πορνεια, "cannot be strictly applied to matrimonial sin." But if that author would have given himself the trouble to look at 1 Cor. v. 1. he would have perceived that the word πορνεια not only *may* be applied to matrimonial sin, but is

weaker part than for the sovereignty of the stronger. It has established just so much command on one side, and just so much subjection on the other, as is necessary to prevent those everlasting contests which perfect equality must unavoidably produce. It lays, at the same time, a foundation for increasing harmony and tenderness by mutual obligations, and reciprocal concessions; and gives to each more frequent opportunities of displaying their affection, by ruling with mildness and submitting with cheerfulness.

There cannot, indeed, be a finer proof of the benevolence of our Religion than this regard and consideration for that part of the species which most wants, and yet in this instance before the promulgation of the Gospel, did least enjoy the privileges of humanity. In

is actually so applied sometimes by the sacred writers; and in the place just cited can scarcely admit of any other sense. In this sense it is also used by our Saviour, Matt. v. 32. xix. 9. And this being incontrovertible, it is, I confess, past my understanding to comprehend, how this precept of Christ can be *flexible* to any other meaning than that plain and obvious one which it bears upon the very face of it, and in which it has been hitherto constantly understood; namely, that the only legitimate ground of divorce is adultery.

In effect, the condition of this sex, at least in the conjugal state, is so infinitely superior to the parts assigned them by the heathens of old, and the Mahometans and Pagans of this day, that they seem to be a different rank and order of beings. Instead of being considered merely as necessary parts of the family, of being confined to the loom and the distaff, and excluded from many of the most essential comforts of life (which was their case in the most civilized nations of antiquity); instead of being entirely cut off from all commerce with the world, imprisoned for life within the walls of a seraglio, and looked upon in no other light than as instruments of pleasure, as having neither rational minds nor immortal souls; as born only to minister to the happiness of others at the expense of their own, to be the slaves of sensuality, caprice and revenge (which is still their condition in eastern countries); instead of this, I say, they are now, by the gradual prevalence of Christian principles and manners, admitted to an equal share in the advantages and the blessings of society. Their understandings are cultivated, their minds improved, their sentiments

ments refined, and their interest and happiness uniformly and properly consulted in every important concern of life.

II. Next to this, in the order of domestic relations, stands the PARENTAL. Here, if any where, one would imagine that mankind must always be the same. One would conclude that nature, by planting in our breasts a most passionate fondness for our offspring, had effectually provided against every act of inhumanity towards them; had made the force of parental love a sufficient barrier against the encroachments of parental power. But in this, as in a thousand other instances, it is evident, that nature, speaking with all her force and eloquence to the heart, was not able to make men hear, or at least obey her dictates. The Gospel was more powerful. It heard and commiserated the cries of infancy, and came in to the assistance of helpless and unprotected innocence; insomuch, that it is most literally and strictly a peculiar happiness to be *born* in a Christian country.

It is well known, that in some of the most celebrated heathen nations, the pitiable state of infancy, which so much wants the care and

indulgence of a parent, was not always able to obtain it; and that in those cases where humanity and compassion pleaded most strongly in its behalf, it was treated with a more than ordinary degree of cruelty. Every one will understand me here to mean the custom of exposing, that is of murdering, weak, deformed, or sickly children, which was for many years practised not only with impunity, but with applause; and what is now considered as the most atrocious of crimes, and worthy of the severest punishment, was then esteemed a wise, political expedient, to rid the state of useless and troublesome members, and was even enjoined by some of their most celebrated sages and legislators. This was one of those blessed effects of philosophy and the fine arts, of which we hear so much from a certain class of writers*.

* The same practice still subsists in China, a country so much celebrated by modern philosophers for the wisdom of its institutions. About 9,000 children are said to be annually exposed in the city of Pekin, and the same number in the rest of the empire.—See *Barrow's Travels in China*, p. 170—176.

Among the Hindoos, children are hung up on trees in baskets, and devoured by birds of prey; and female infants among the Rajpoot Hindoos are destroyed by starving. *Buchanan's Mem. on India*, App. p. 94 and 97.

The

The condition of those children that were suffered to survive was, in some of those countries, scarce less deplorable than the fate of those who were condemned to die. The extreme rigour of their education, exceeding all the bounds of virtuous discipline, and contrary to all the dictates of natural tenderness; the unlimited power allowed to the father, extending to the liberty and even life of the child, and the intemperate use they too frequently made of this power, rendered the situation of their youth in general extremely irksome and unpleasant, sometimes truly miserable.

These inhumanities are now no more. Nothing can exceed the tenderness shewn by parents towards their offspring in Christian countries, from their earliest infancy to their ripest maturity: and so far is the public from countenancing in private individuals the destruction of their children, that it guards against any unnatural desertion of them, and is itself a parent. The power of the father is just sufficient for all the useful purposes of education; the severity of education no greater than the proper culture of the mind requires:

and

and there subsists in general between the elder and the younger parts of a family, that harmony and good understanding which resembles the easy intercourse of friends, rather than the awful distance between authority and subjection.

III. But in no part of domestic society are the happy effects of Christianity so visible as in the lowest, though not least useful, branch of it, that of SERVANTS; agreeably to the blessed spirit of that Religion, which lends its aid most willingly where it is most necessary, in raising the lowly, in healing the broken spirit, and cherishing the contrite heart.

It has been justly observed, that under most of the governments in Europe (severe as some of them are) the *bulk* of the people do in reality enjoy more true liberty than was ever possessed by the lower classes, under the freest states of antiquity: because, with a few exceptions (which are every day lessening), they are no longer subject to that worst of all oppressions, DOMESTIC SERVITUDE; whereas, in all the ancient republics, by far the greatest part of the inhabitants were not freemen,

freemen, but slaves*. In fact, every private family was, in the times of paganism, a little despotic kingdom. The master was the tyrant, and the servants his wretched subjects, whom he bought and sold, and treated as he did his cattle; whom he could punish and torture as he pleased, and put to death with or without reason, and even for his own amusement. It is true, indeed, that the *vernæ*, or home-born slaves, were sometimes treated with lenity, and even with tenderness and indulgence. But these favourites of fortune bore a very small proportion indeed, to that immense multitude who were made to feel the utmost rigour of their condition. In general, these wretched beings were continually exposed to every evil that the most wanton tyranny could inflict. They were compelled frequently to till the ground in chains†, or confined in subterraneous dungeons, and strained to labour beyond their strength by

* In the 110th Olympiad, there were at Athens only 21,000 citizens, and 400,000 slaves. In the small island of Ægina there were 470,000 slaves. It was common for a private citizen of Rome to have 10 or 20,000. *Taylor's Civil Law*, p. 436-7.

† Catenati cultores, vincti fossores, are expressions we frequently meet with in the Roman authors.

the severest treatment. They were obliged to suffer every insult, and every injury without resistance and without redress. They had no protection afforded them, could have no justice done to them, no reparation made to them*. They were subject to the cruelty not only of their own masters, but of every one that met them. "They had no place to flee "unto, and no man cared for their souls." The hurt that was done to them and to a beast was estimated in the same manner. Nothing was considered but the diminution of their value, and the loss sustained by their master. The injury or the pain endured by the slave himself never came into contemplation. Their evidence was scarcely ever taken but by torture. They were not supposed capable of being applied to in any other way. If their master happened to be found murdered in his house, every slave in the family (which sometimes amounted to several thousands) were frequently put to death; even those that were confessedly innocent. Nay, they were sometimes made the sacrifice of a youthful frolic, and murdered in the streets and roads, by

* Cum in servos *omnia* liceant, &c. Seneca de Clement. i. 18.

thousands,

thousands, for amusement. These are the effects which the possession of unlimited power over our own species has actually produced, and which (unless counteracted and subdued by religious principle) it has *always a natural tendency* to produce even on the most benevolent and best cultivated minds*.

Such was the temper of paganism, towards a very large class of the human species: a class too, which ought to have attracted pity and protection, instead of meeting with the bitterest oppression. The temper of the Gospel was of a different cast. From the very first moment of its appearance, it gave every consolation, every support, to those who groaned under this heavy bondage, that was consistent with the peace and welfare of society, and with the avowed principles of the Christian Religion. The first teachers of this religion did not indeed expressly prohibit slavery; nor did they tell the slaves whom they converted to the faith, that their conversion made them free, and released them from the obedience due to their masters. This would have been a most imprudent and

* See Appendix, note (b).

dangerous doctrine, dangerous both to the teachers and the disciples. It would have occasioned the former to be represented by their enemies as adverse to all authority and subordination, as disturbers of the peace and order of society; it would have armed against them all the powers of the earth, and overwhelmed them and their infant system of religion in one common ruin. To the slaves themselves, it would have been equally destructive and fatal. It would have excited them to violent and sanguinary, yet vain and ineffectual, resistance; and would have involved them, finally, in far greater miseries than they before experienced. But besides this, such a proceeding would have been diametrically opposite to the distinguishing character and genius of the Christian Revelation; one of whose leading and fundamental principles was, not to interfere with, or oppose itself in the least, to any peculiar form of government, any civil institution, any long acknowledged and long established authority, either political or domestic; but on the contrary, to inculcate a peaceful and dutiful submission to all lawful superiors; to "*every*

"ordinance

"ordinance of man for the Lord's sake."* Yet, at the same time, it took care to lay down such general rules of conduct, and governing principles of action, for *all* ranks and conditions of men, as should silently and quietly, but effectually, correct the inherent vices or adventitious corruptions of every kind of power; such as should gradually soften and smooth away the asperities of every species of arbitrary government, whether supreme or subordinate, whether exercised over nations or individuals; and rather meliorate and reform them by gentleness, than subvert and destroy them at once, by open force and violence.

Another great principle of this Divine Religion, and its Divine Author, was, to require from its followers a meek submission and patient resignation to evils, and sufferings, and persecutions of every kind, however unmerited, however unprovoked and unjust. "I say "unto you, resist not evil; bless them that "curse you, do good to them that hate you, "and pray for them which despitefully use "you, and persecute you; not rendering evil

* 1 Pet. ii. 13.

"for evil, or railing for railing; but contrari-
"wise blessing. Avenge not yourselves, but
"rather give place unto wrath; for it is
"written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay,
"saith the Lord*." In perfect conformity to these precepts was the example of our blessed Lord; "who, when he was reviled,
"reviled not again; when he suffered, he
"threatened not; but committed himself to
"him that judgeth righteously†."

With these ideas and these sentiments, so predominant in every page of the sacred writers, it is evident what course the great Founder, and the first preachers of Christianity, would take, respecting the long established and almost universal practice of DOMESTIC SERVITUDE. Notwithstanding the extreme hardships and cruelties inseparable from that condition, they would not think it expedient to annihilate at once the authority of the master, and burst asunder suddenly the bonds of the slave; but would suggest to the one, such motives to acquiescence and submission, and to the other, such reasons

* Matt. v. 39. 44. 2 Pet. iii. 9. Rom. xii. 19.
† 1 Pet. ii. 23.

for

for moderation and tenderness in the exercise of his power, as they well knew would greatly lighten the miseries of this state for the present, and by degrees totally remove them.

Accordingly, masters were enjoined to give to their servants (that is their slaves) that which was "just and equal, and to forbear "threatening;" and they were told, what they had never been told before, that *they* also had a master in heaven, with whom was no respect of persons*, who would one day demand from them a strict account of the use they had made of the unlimited power they possessed over their unfortunate fellow-creatures. They must know also, and would frequently be reminded, that they, as well as every other disciple of Christ, are commanded to consider all mankind as their *brethren*†: to treat them as such, to love them as themselves, to be condescending, gentle, tender-hearted, merciful, compassionate, and kindly affectioned towards them, and of course towards their slaves also.

To the slaves, on the other hand, the most express commands were given, "to be sub-

"ject

* Col. iv. 1. Eph. vi. 9. † 1 Pet. iii. 8.

"ject to their masters with all fear, not only "to the good and gentle, but also to the fro-"ward; to please them well in all things; "not answering gain, not purloining, but "shewing all good fidelity; not with eye-ser-"vice as men-pleasers, but as the servants of "Christ, with good-will doing service, as to "the Lord, and not to men*."

These precepts were evidently meant to guard against all provocation, all neglect of duty, all want of attention and diligence on the part of the slave; to render him meek, humble, patient, submissive, honest, industrious, faithful; and by thus disarming the anger, and conciliating the affection of his master, to lighten, as much as possible, the weight of the chain that was upon him. At the same time, the slaves had encouragements and consolations held out to them, to which their heathen brethren were utter strangers. They were told, that by serving their masters well, they were not only "pleasing men but "God; that they were adorning the doctrine "of their Saviour; that they were to look "forwards for their reward to the glorious

* Eph. vi. 5. 8. 1 Pet. ii. 18. Tit. ii. 10.

"appearing

"appearing of the great God and our Saviour "Jesus Christ; and that whatever good any "of them did, the same should he receive "of the Lord, whether he were bond or "free*."

These were considerations sufficient to support, and sooth, and strengthen their souls under the harshest treatment, and the heaviest pressures of bondage; while the prudence, the fidelity, and the obedience, recommended to them, would avert or soften the severities to which they were exposed. With these injunctions to the slaves on the one hand, and to the masters on the other, there can be no doubt that the condition of the Christian slave was far easier and happier than that of the Pagan. And wherever these injunctions are faithfully and conscientiously observed, the evils of servitude will be in a great measure subdued, and some of its sharpest stings will be drawn out. But this was not all that the Gospel did for this unfortunate race of men. When the empire became Christian, laws were made for their protection and relief. The influence both of government and of

* Eph. vi. 6, 7, 8. Tit. ii. 10, 13.

religion,

religion, was continually operating in their favour, and gradually prepared the way for that happy event, which, to the immortal honour of Christianity, took place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries; I mean the utter extinction of the pagan system of slavery in Europe. It is true, indeed, that in consequence of the feudal tenure, and feudal customs, introduced into Christendom by its barbarian conquerors, another species of servitude for some time prevailed, under the name of villenage. But this, in point of severity, was not to be compared with the horrors of ancient slavery. And even that new servitude by degrees gave way, in the greater part of the Christian world, to the mild genius of the gospel, insensibly mixing with the civil policy, and tempering the laws, customs, and usages of every country that received it.

There is, it must be confessed, another species of slavery still existing in some parts of the Christian world, (that of the African negroes,) which seems to bear too strong a resemblance to its predecessor in the times of paganism. This cannot be denied. But from

from what we have already seen of the influence of Christianity, in the instances just mentioned, we have every reason to indulge the consoling hope, that the same beneficent spirit of the gospel, which by degrees extinguished pagan slavery, will also gradually and without injury to any one (for our heavenly religion generally effects its purposes by the gentlest means), relieve mankind from the pressure of this and every other species of personal and perpetual servitude.

In the meanwhile, it would redound infinitely to the honour, and I am persuaded ultimately to the benefit of the West-India proprietors, if they would themselves voluntarily take measures for the *gradual extinction* of that opprobrious and unchristian traffic in human beings, the Slave Trade to the coast of Africa; which on every ground of reason, humanity, justice, and religion, is utterly indefensible, and is now admitted, even by some of those who were advocates for its continuance, to be so. See more particularly *the speech of Mr. Bryan Edwards, a Member of the Assembly of Jamaica*, Nov. 19, 1789; in which he acknowledges that the manner

manner in which slaves are procured, and the fatal effects of the Slave Trade in Africa, are precisely such as they are represented to be by those who contend for the abolition of it.—" The *whole*," says he, " or the greatest " part of the immense continent of Africa, is " a field of *warfare and desolation* ; a wilder- " ness in which the inhabitants are *wolves* " towards each other. That this scene of " *oppression, fraud, treachery, and blood*, if " not *originally occasioned*, is in part (I *will* " *not* say wholly) upheld by the Slave Trade, " I dare not dispute. Every man in the sugar " islands may be convinced that it is so, who " will enquire of any African negroes, on " their first arrival, concerning the circum- " stances of their captivity."

After this honest and explicit avowal of the direful effects of the Slave Trade, (which at the same time every one must see is softened down as much as possible) by one who was a strenuous advocate for that Trade, how is it possible for a nation professing the *mild and merciful religion of the Gospel*, to authorize and encourage that inhuman traffic? This is surely one of those many strange

inconsistencies

inconsistencies of the human mind, which it is difficult to explain and impossible to defend!

It must be acknowledged, however, for the credit of our countrymen, that a very considerable part of them, comprehending some of the most illustrious characters in this kingdom, some of the wisest, most upright, and most enlightened statesmen which this or any other country ever produced, have expressed, in the strongest terms, their abhorrence of this Trade; and generously laying aside all their political differences (for men of every party and persuasion united in this great cause) contended for the immediate abolition of it, with a force of argument, and a splendour of eloquence, which astonished all who heard them. These noble efforts, however, have all failed of success. And the same fate seems to have attended a plan even for the *gradual* abolition of the Trade, which, in the year 1796, was proposed in the House of Commons by Mr. Charles Ellis, a gentleman of most respectable character, and a very large proprietor of plantations in Jamaica, who would scarcely propose any thing that would be really injurious to the possessors of that sort of property.

property. This plan, which appears to be a wise and a practicable one, was approved by the House of Commons, and was strongly recommended by his Majesty's ministers to the Colonial Legislatures; but I cannot learn that any step has yet been taken to carry it into execution.

This is much to be lamented, because nothing is more clear than that if the importation of slaves from the coast of Africa was gradually done away by salutary regulations for that purpose; and if, at the same time, the natural increase of the negroes already imported, was encouraged by treating them *universally* (as many worthy proprietors already do) with lenity and kindness, by continuing to enact humane and equitable laws in their favour, and above all by cordially promoting their instruction in the principles of morality and religion, and appointing clergymen for that very purpose (which was strongly recommended to the colonies by the British government, but to which no attention has hitherto been paid;) If, I say, measures such as these were generally adopted, and steadily persevered in, a sufficient supply of slaves for

all

all the reasonable purposes of West-India cultivation might easily be kept up*, and the miseries of slavery itself so softened and assuaged, as to render the condition of the negroes not much inferior to the labouring poor in European countries; whilst the cruelties attending the African Trade would be no longer a reproach to this Christian kingdom.

* This is not said on light grounds. It was proved by many eloquent speakers in the House of Commons: it was proved by the evidence given before a committee of the Privy Council, appointed to examine into the nature of the Slave Trade; (which I attended myself very constantly for near a twelvemonth,) and what is still more to the purpose, it is proved by fact and by experience. For it is well known, that several opulent planters in some of the West-India Islands have for many years kept up their stock without any importation at all; and it is no less certain, that throughout the whole State of Virginia, where there has been no importation of negroes for a very considerable length of time, (I believe never since the American revolution,) and where the climate is much less friendly to the negroes than the West-India Islands, the number of their slaves has increased so rapidly and to such a degree, as almost to occasion some alarm to the government. Of this I have authentic and incontestible proofs in my possession. These facts, in my apprehension, completely do away the plea of *necessity*, which is the great argument, indeed the only plausible one, for the continuance of the Slave Trade.

SECTION II.

We have seen, in the preceding Section, that in every domestic relation, Christianity has visibly and undeniably promoted the happiness of mankind. Nor is its beneficial influence less evident in all the great and important concerns of civil and social life.

In the article of government, its operation has been highly salutary and useful; not by enjoining or prescribing any peculiar form of government (for with the kingdoms of this world, and the various modes of civil institutions, it disclaimed all concern), but by regulating the respective duties, both of those who governed, and those who were governed. It reminded the latter that their Christian profession did by no means dissolve or weaken (as some of them were apt to imagine) their political obligations, but on the contrary confirmed and strengthened them; that under whatever form of government they lived, and whatever allegiance they owed, *before* their conversion, the same was still due from them

after

after it; that their Religion made no other alteration in the case, than that of rendering them still better citizens and better subjects, and of enforcing every civil tie, by the sanction of divine as well as human authority. They were not therefore to use their spiritual freedom "as a cloak of maliciousness," as a cover for faction and mischief, for dissension and tumult; as a pretence for disturbing the peace and order of society: but they were to submit themselves patiently to "*every* ordi-"nance of man for the Lord's sake;" they were to be subject to those rulers, under whom Providence had placed them, and Christianity found them, "not only for wrath, but also "for conscience sake." They were "to "obey magistrates, to be ready to every "good work, to render to all their dues, "tribute to whom tribute was due, custom "to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour "to whom honour*."

In the same manner, it was required of their rulers, that however unlimited their power might be by the laws and constitution of their country, they should themselves limit and

* 1 Pet. ii. 16. 23. Rom. xiii. 5. 7. Tit. iii.

restrain it by the great immutable laws of moral rectitude; that they should observe, in their public as well as private conduct, the dictates of justice, equity, moderation, mercy, humanity, and universal good-will, which the Gospel prescribed to *them*, as well as to every other disciple of Christ. Their duty was repeatedly set before them with the utmost plainness and freedom. They heard, and *trembled* as they heard, the inspired preachers reasoning before them, concerning "righte-"ousness, temperance, and judgment to "come." They were told, that the authority they were invested with, was given them to be "a terror, not to good works, but to "the evil;" that they were ministers of God for the good of their people; that of course, if they abused this power to cruel or wicked purposes, they must be accountable for that abuse to the great Governor of the Universe; must stand before his tribunal with the meanest of their subjects, to be recompensed for the blessings they had bestowed, or punished for the miseries they had inflicted, on mankind*.

* Acts xxiv. 25. Rom. xiii. 3, 4.

It could hardly fail, but that precepts such as these, repeatedly inculcated and deeply impressed on the minds of those to whom they were addressed, would produce the most beneficial consequences; and so in fact they have. For nothing can be more evident, than that the various modes of *established* and *legitimate government* now existing in Europe, are either in their form or their administration, and sometimes in both, far superior to those of the same description in the ancient Pagan world, and consequently productive of much greater happiness to those who live under them. Were it convenient or proper to enter here into a minute comparison of these different political fabrics, it would be extremely easy to prove the truth of what is here asserted; but I must content myself with very briefly contrasting some of the principal outlines and distinguishing features of civil policy in ancient and modern times, which will, I conceive, sufficiently justify the opinion here advanced.

1. In the first place it is well known, that except in the free states of Greece and Rome, (and that only for a few centuries) a ferocious

despotism prevailed over the greater part of the ancient habitable globe; and that even those celebrated republics scarcely ever enjoyed (at least for any considerable period of time) two of the sweetest and most valuable fruits of liberty, and without which indeed no true liberty can long subsist, internal tranquillity and external peace. They were continually agitated and distracted within by popular commotions and sanguinary convulsions, or exposed without to unceasing and inexpiable wars, which always destroyed their repose, and sometimes endangered their very existence. This was the case, with but few exceptions, even in their most perfect state; and, in their decline, they were mangled and torn in pieces by such dreadful massacres and proscriptions, by such deliberate and premeditated methods of murdering each other, as cannot be recited without pain and horror*.

2. We

* See more particularly the account which Thucydides gives, lib. iii. of the sanguinary dissensions, seditions, tumults, and convulsions, which distracted the little island of Corcyra; and the historian assures us, that the *same* miseries were experienced afterwards in almost every other part of Greece. See also l'Origine des Loix, &c. V. 5. p. 74.

2. We may perceive, that in the freest ancient states, they could scarcely ever maintain a true genuine equal liberty, diffused through the whole mass of the people, and distributed in just proportions (as it is in this kingdom) through every rank and order of the community. They were always in danger, either from the artifices and power of the few, or from the licentiousness and violence of the many; and whilst they guarded some one avenue with the greatest care, tyranny generally surprised them at another. Nor did their boasted freedom (such as it was) extend in general much beyond the walls of the metropolis, and the adjacent territory. It could seldom subsist, but under the immediate influence of the legislature. The governors

The horrible proscriptions of Marius, Sylla, and the triumvirs, and the dreadful civil wars between the leading men of the republic, which followed soon after, are well known.

The same scenes occur perpetually in the annals of the Assyrian, the Median, the Persian, the Turkish, the Moorish, and the Hindostan empire. The principal source of all these horrors was the want of *a merciful Religion*; and the same want has, we all know, produced the same direful effects in our own times in a nation where ALL Religion was at once annihilated.

governors of the provinces, removed from under the eye of the supreme magistrate, and destitute of all religious restraint, became the most savage and merciless of tyrants. The unhappy people over whom they presided, were continually exposed to plunder, rapine, oppression, insult, and every kind of injury; and thus whilst liberty reigned in the centre, the utmost rage of despotism laid waste the extremities of the empire*.

3. One

* See Choix des Memoires de l'Academie Royale, first part of V. 1. p. 151.

The character of Verres was, to a great degree, the character of almost all the Roman governors. Cicero, speaking of the Provinces *generally*, says, Populatæ, vexatæ, funditus eversæ provinciæ: socii stipendiariique populi Romani afflicti, miseri, jam non salutis spem sed exitii solatium quærunt. In Q. Cecil. Divinat. 3. This is amply confirmed by Sallust, Ignavissimi homines per summum scelus omnia ea sociis adimere, quæ fortissimi viri victores reliquerant; proinde quasi injuriam facere id demum esset imperio uti. Bell. Cat. xii.

The Athenians also treated the cities and islands dependent on them with the utmost rigour and inhumanity. It was their avowed principle, and their constant practice, to oppress, harass, and plunder them with the most unfeeling rapacity, to reduce them to the most abject state of dependence, and to create and foment perpetual dissensions and factions among them, in order to render them utterly incapable of annoying the parent state. See l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, & des

3. One of the principal characteristics of a sound constitution, is the system of laws which it has established for the protection and security of the people, and the regulation of public manners. If we judge of the ancient governments by this criterion, they will not rise very high in our estimation. I will touch only with great brevity on a few of the most remarkable laws in different countries.

Among the Egyptians there was a law, which not only encouraged but rewarded theft *.

The laws of Draco were, as is well known, immeasurably and capriciously severe. They were written in characters of blood. They punished with the same rigour the slightest offences, and the most atrocious crimes.

The laws of Lycurgus were, in many instances, unjust and cruel; and some of the most

des Sciences, V. 5. p. 75. But more particularly consult that very curious and admirable treatise of Xenophon's, *on the Republic of Athens;* which, although professedly written in defence of the Athenians, yet exhibits such a picture of iniquity, cruelty and tyranny, as must for ever decide the opinion of every thinking man, on the character of that mode of government.

* Diod. Sic. L. 1. c. 80. Aul. Gell. L. xi. c. 18.

most celebrated Greek philosophers have condemned them, as better calculated to form good soldiers, than virtuous and honest citizens*.

They encouraged theft, adultery, and many other gross immoralities and enormities†.

The cryptia, or places of concealment, from whence the Spartans issued out upon the Helots, and murdered them in cold blood, is said by Aristotle to have been an institution of Lycurgus‡.

But the consummation of all was, that this Legislator not only permitted, but enjoined the murder of sickly or deformed infants §.

4. In Solon's laws there are several which are objectionable, but there is one in the highest degree reprehensible. It is that in which, though

* Aristotle Pol. L. ii. c. 9. and L. vii. c. 14. Plutarch in Lyc. endeavours to defend them, but in vain.

† L'Origine des Loix, &c. Vol. 5. p. 429. Plutarch in Lyc. Whatever might be the *intention* of the legislator, in obliging the Spartan boys to steal their victuals, &c. the *real effect* of it was to encourage deceit and fraud, and to render property insecure.

‡ Plut. in Lyc. § Ibid.

though he did not enjoin, yet as far as he was able, he gave credit and estimation to the most detestable of crimes; and even encouraged it by his own example*.

In Crete and some other Grecian States, it was also encouraged by law†.

The laws of the twelve tables were sanguinary and cruel, more especially those respecting insolvent debtors; who, after an imprisonment of sixty days, might be sold for slaves, or put to death, and their bodies divided among their creditors. Ingenious and learned men have endeavoured to explain away the severity of this law, but without success‡.

Romulus

* Plut. Solon. sub init.

† Plut. de Liber. Educat. c. 15. Aristotle Polit. L. ii. c. 10.

‡ A very learned critic and civilian has an ingenious dissertation on this subject, in which he undertakes to prove, that the law of the twelve tables did not condemn the insolvent debtor to death, but to servitude; he was to become the slave of the creditor, and to pay his debt by his labour. And if there were many creditors, they were to divide his personal labour among them, in proportion to their respective demands upon him. But this interpretation goes contrary to the concurrent opinions of Quintilian, Aulus Gellius, Tertullian, and other ancient authors, who all agree in supporting the

Romulus allowed the murder of infants, and it does not appear that this practice was forbidden by any subsequent law. Some think it was confirmed by the twelve tables. It was, however, certainly permitted to pass with impunity; and the Roman State, as well as almost every other in the ancient world, was for many ages drenched in the blood of these innocent victims to a mistaken and inhuman policy*.

The cruelty of the Roman law, with respect to children, did not stop here; it was not content with the destruction of infants; it extended its severity even to the adult; it gave the father uncontrolled and unlimited power over his children; it considered them not as *persons* but as *things*, as part of the furniture of the family mansion, which the master of the family might remove or sell, or destroy, like any other part of the furniture, at

the plain and literal sense of the law. And it is not probable that a modern civilian in the eighteenth century, should discover a meaning in a Roman law, which was totally unknown to the Romans themselves. See Taylor's *Commentarius de Inope Debitore in partes dissecando*, p. 15. and the authors above mentioned.

* Dion. Halic. Rom. Antiq. l. ii.

at his discretion. In one respect the condition of a son, was worse than that of a slave. A slave could be sold only once, a son three times; and he might be imprisoned, scourged, exiled, or put to death by the pater-familias, without appeal to any other tribunal *. With respect to daughters, there was an act of power more exquisitely cruel, than perhaps all the rest. The father could compel his married daughter to repudiate a husband whom she tenderly loved, and whom he himself had approved †.

But what was, if possible, still more preposterous and intolerable, the wife herself, though the mother perhaps of a numerous family, was subjected no less than her children, to the paternal authority and despotic will of her husband. She was in the eye of the law considered as his daughter, and might be retained or dismissed at pleasure; and for certain crimes (some of them of a very trivial nature) might be put to death. The liberty of divorce also, on the part of the husband, was

* Nieuport. de Rit. Rom. p. 585.

† L'Esprit des Loix, T. iii. Liv. 26. c. 3. p. 75.

was (as I before observed) almost unbounded, and in the later ages of the republic, was perpetually exercised with the most wanton, insolent, and capricious tyranny *.

Such were the laws of the most celebrated nations of antiquity; and as the legislative acts of a country present us with the truest picture of its manners, and give us at one view, the genius and the character of a whole people taken collectively, we shall be at no loss what opinion to form of the ancient Pagans and their government.

5. And as the laws were, in many important instances, inhuman or vicious, the administration of them was no less partial and corrupt. That great bulwark of liberty, that most powerful protector of the rights and immunities, the persons and properties of the subject, the civil and criminal jurisprudence of the State, was, among the ancient commonwealths,

* L'Esprit des Loix, T. ii. p. 88. And the licentiousness of the women in this respect, (for *they* also had the power of divorce) was at least equal to that of the men—nunquid jam ulla repudio erubescit, (says Seneca) postquam illustres quædam ac nobiles fæminæ non consulum numero sed maritorum annos suos computant. Sen. de Beneficiis, iii. 16.

monwealths, very far removed from that degree of purity and perfection in which it is now found in some Christian countries, but more especially in our own. In what manner justice was administered at Athens, is evident, from their treatment of the two most upright and virtuous of their citizens, Socrates and Aristides; and by what motives the judges were commonly guided in forming their judicial opinions on the character and merits of the accused person, may be collected from the well-known conversation between the latter of those illustrious men, and one of the judges who condemned him*. In Rome, especially in the later periods of the republic, the courts of justice were one continued scene of the most open and undisguised iniquity, venality, partiality and corruption, insomuch, that it was hardly possible for a poor man to obtain redress for the cruellest injuries; or for a rich man to be brought to punishment for the most atrocious crimes†.

In all these great and important articles of civil policy, (and in a multitude of others which might be mentioned) the infinite superiority

* Plutarch in Aristid. † See Appendix, note (d).

of

II. Next to the miseries arising from cruel systems of domestic and civil policy, from bad forms of government, from oppressive laws and corrupt forms of judicature, there are few evils more formidable and afflicting than those of war. And here, too, we have a manifest advantage over the ancient Pagans.

I have formerly observed *, and some arguments have been adduced to prove, that in Christian countries the horrors of war (that severest scourge of the human race) have been greatly mitigated, and their frequency, their duration and their attendant miseries, considerably diminished. In further confirmation of this fact, and in addition to what has been already advanced in support of it, I would entreat the reader, when he is perusing the history of the ancient States, to pay a little attention to the nature, the origin, the number, the extent and the continuance of their wars, and to the methods in which they were conducted. We are accustomed, from our infancy, to look on those people with such

* Sermons, Vol. i. Serm. xiii. p. 317. 10th ed.

implicit

implicit and almost idolatrous veneration: we are so dazzled with the splendour of their victories, and the glory of their conquests; with the courage, the ardour, the intrepidity, the heroism, the grandeur and elevation of mind they so frequently displayed; and, above all, we are so charmed with the eloquence and the sublimity with which their martial achievements are recorded by their historians, and immortalized by their poets, that we never think of that horrible inhumanity which was the great prominent feature of their character; we never see the torrents of blood they shed, in order to arrive at their favourite object, nor the various and inconceivable miseries they spread throughout the world. The plain truth is that they were the common enemies of mankind; the oppressors, the plunderers, the robbers, and the tyrants of the whole earth. By much the greatest part of their wars were voluntary and unprovoked; were wars of aggression, of interest, injustice, rapine, and ambition. They gave their protection to every one that applied for it, without the least regard to the justice of the cause, for the sole purpose of extending their con-

quests; and the most solemn treaties were evaded or violated, without the smallest scruple, whenever their interest appeared to require it. A lust of empire, a passion for martial achievements, an insatiable thirst for glory, were the ruling principles of their conduct, and to these every other consideration, however sacred, was made to give way*. Their governments were little else than military establishments. Every citizen was a soldier, and every kingdom upon the watch to devour its neighbour. The surest road to the honours of the state was through the field of battle; and men were obliged to force their way by the sword to almost every object of their pursuit.

Whilst every thing thus tended to inflame the fiercest passions of the human heart, no wonder that the wars of the ancients were incessant and sanguinary, that the injustice and wantonness with which they were begun, could be exceeded by nothing but the vindictive and implacable spirit with which they were carried on, and that the world was conse-

* See Appendix, note (e).

quently

quently for many ages overwhelmed with ruin, desolation and bloodshed. The savage and cruel treatment of their captives in war, is well known to every one in the least acquainted with ancient history; every page of which is polluted with scenes of this nature, too numerous and too horrible to be specified here. It is sufficient to observe, in general, that the loss of thousands in the field, was in those ages the least part of the evils of war. Those among the vanquished, who survived, had reason to envy the lot of those that fell. Perpetual slavery, or an ignominious death (sometimes torture) by the hand of the executioner, were their certain destiny: and even among nations the most polished, and the most celebrated for their private and their public virtue, (such were the *pagan* notions of virtue) we are continually shocked with the desolation of whole countries, with the entire destruction of flourishing and opulent cities, and with the indiscriminate massacre and utter extermination, not only of those able to bear arms, but of the most helpless and unoffending part of the inhabitants of every age, sex, and condition.

If we go back to the earliest ages of Greece, Homer very honestly and very concisely tells us, what the general practice in his time was in one of the principal operations of war. "These," says he, "are the evils which follow the capture of a town. The men are killed, the city is burnt to the ground, and the women and children are doomed to slavery*."

The descendants of Homer's heroes, in subsequent ages, did not in this respect degenerate from their ferocious ancestors. On the contrary, they kept constantly improving on those models of barbarity. After the taking of a town, and sometimes after the most solemn promises and oaths that they would spare the lives of the besieged, they murdered every human creature in the place, not excepting even the women and children. Instances of this sort occur perpetually in the Peloponnesian war, as well as almost every other†.

The

* Il. ix. v. 590.

† See Thucydides throughout: but more particularly the extreme cruelty of the Athenians and Lacedæmonians to their prisoners, l. ii. The massacre of the Myteleneans and Platæans, and the incredible barbarities at Corcyra, l. iii. The murder of the Æginetæ and Megareans, l. iv. of the Scioneans and Melians, l. v. of the Mycalessians, l. vii.

In

The Romans trod but too closely in the footsteps of the Greeks, their masters and preceptors in cruelty, as well as in every thing else. Abundant proofs of this occur in all their histories*.

With

In this last instance, the Thracians not only butchered men, women, and children, without distinction, (even *a whole school of boys*) but also every living animal that fell in their way. The historian, though in general very little affected with scenes of this kind, cannot help expressing his horror at such a slaughter as this. But, says he, (by way of mitigation) Το γενος το των Θρακων φονικωτατον εστι. It is true. But that epithet was applicable not only to those barbarians, but to the Athenians themselves, and to every other state in Greece. It describes, in short, most accurately, in one comprehensive word, the true character of all pagan antiquity. Most unfortunately for the world, this γενος φονικωτατον, this murder-loving race, has of late revived; but let it be remembered, that it revived under the fostering care, not of the Gospel, but of its true parent, PHILOSOPHY: by which word I mean throughout this Essay, (when speaking of the present times) not that genuine sublime philosophy which we meet with in the immortal works of Bacon, Boyle, Newton, &c. but those wild pernicious doctrines which assume the venerable name of philosophy, which have been disseminated through the world, principally by Voltaire, and his numerous disciples and coadjutors, and are justly considered as the chief source of those dreadful calamities that have been for so many years desolating almost the whole continent of Europe.

* Livy, l. ix. c. 14. l. xxi. c. 14. l. xxvi. c. 15. l. xlv. c. 34.—See Appendix, note (f).

With respect to all the various nations of Asia, the whole history of that country, both ancient and modern, from one end of the continent to the other, exhibits such an uninterrupted series of barbarity, bloodshed, havoc, and devastation, in their incessant wars, revolts, revolutions, and intestine dissentions, as it is impossible to contemplate without disgust, astonishment, and horror*.

Yet all this, and more than this, was naturally to be expected from the *principles* entertained and avowed by the great warriors and statesmen of antiquity. One of them was this, "to glut our souls with the cruellest vengeance upon our enemies is perfectly lawful, is an appetite implanted in us by nature, and is the most exquisite pleasure that the human mind can taste†." In this most exquisite pleasure they indulged themselves without reserve; in this species of voluptuousness they were certainly perfect epicures.

It

* See the dreadful achievements of Gengis-Khan, Timur, Aurengzebe, and Nadir Schach, in the Histories of India and Persia.

† Thucyd. l. vii. p. 540. The original words can scarcely be translated with sufficient energy—*αποπλησαι της γνωμης το θυμουμενον.* Even in the Pelew Islands they put their captives in war to death.—*Account of Pelew Islands by Mr. Keate*, p. 33.

It is impossible not to remark here, the complete opposition between this favourite doctrine of Paganism, and the doctrine of Revelation. "To glut our souls with the cruellest vengeance on our enemies, is the most exquisite of all human enjoyments," says the former. "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath," says the latter. Nothing can so strongly mark the different spirit of the two Religions; and the consequences to mankind have already in some measure corresponded, and will hereafter correspond still more, to that difference. Though too much fierceness and animosity, too much propensity to war, too many acts of passion and cruelty, are still to be found among the nations of the earth, yet the diabolical principle of *vengeance* is certainly much abated, and many of its most tragical effects are no longer seen. To a certain degree there must undoubtedly be disputes and contests both between kingdoms and individuals, so long as kingdoms consist of men, and men are subject to the infirmities of human nature. But that *vindictive* and *implacable fury* which raged in the breasts of the ancient conquerors, does not

not seem to be as it was then, the *predominant passion*, the *general turn* and temper of the present age. It *seldom* happens that wars are now begun wantonly and injuriously (as they were *perpetually* among the ancients) with the *sole view* of oppressing and enslaving an innocent and unoffending people. A thirst of power and of conquest has given way to more rational and humane pursuits; a certain gentleness of manners mixes itself in the warmest contentions; and even where recourse to arms is found unavoidable, there generally appears on all sides a mutual disposition to soften and alleviate, as much as possible, those dreadful evils which are, to a certain degree, inseparable from national contests. They who suffer in the field are now almost the only sufferers. The rest, though vanquished, are neither enslaved nor put to death. They are treated commonly with lenity and tenderness: and even when obliged to pass under the dominion of a foreign master, are sometimes benefited instead of being injured by the change*.

III. There

* The reader will perceive that all these observations relate solely to nations *professing and practising Christianity.*

III. There is still another very remarkable instance in which the Gospel has put a stop to a species of cruelty of the most atrocious nature; and that is, the entire abolition of *human sacrifices*. This horrible practice prevailed throughout every region of the heathen world, to a degree which is almost incredible, and still prevails in many savage countries, where Christianity has not yet reached. There are incontestable proofs of its having subsisted among the Egyptians, the Syrians, the Persians, the Phœnicians, and all the various nations of the East*. It was,

anity. Where Christianity is extinguished, and philosophy substituted in its room, there you immediately see all the savageness of ancient Paganism regaining its empire over the mind, and manifesting its ferocious spirit in war, in civil dissension, in its laws, its punishments, and every other great concern of human life.

* Porphyry περι αποχης, l. xi. s. 27. Herod. l. vii. It appears also to have prevailed to a dreadful degree among the ancient Hindoos. See Maurice's Indian Antiquities, v. i. from p. 152 to 337. The Vedas themselves, that is, the sacred books of the Hindoos, enjoined it, p. 162. See also in p. 181—188, the horrible description of the *black goddess* Callee, to whom human sacrifices were anciently offered in Hindostan. From a late very interesting Publication by Mr. Buchanan, one of the Chaplains at Calcutta, called *A Memoir on the Expediency of an Ecclesiastical*

was, we all know, one of the crying sins of the Canaanites, one of the causes of their extermination by the hands of the Israelites, and one of the principal reasons of the many peremptory and tremendous prohibitions to the latter, not to have the slightest commerce or communication with those monsters of cruelty.

astical Establishment in India, it appears, that human sacrifices still subsist among the Hindoos. Death is inflicted in various ways in their sacred rites. Children are sacrificed by their parents to Gunga. Men and women drown themselves in the Ganges, in the places reputed holy. They devote themselves to death by falling under the wheels of the machine which carries their gods.—Widows are burned and buried alive with their deceased husbands. And it was calculated, by the late learned Mr. William Chambers, that the widows who perish by this self-devotedness in the northern provinces of Hindostan alone, are not less than 10,000 annually.—App. p. 95, 96, 97, 98.—This shews, in the strongest point of view, of what infinite importance it is to communicate the light of the Gospel to heathen nations, as it is the only effectual means of extirpating the savage customs to which they are all more or less addicted, especially that of human sacrifices. Christianity has already annihilated this horrible practice wherever it has been introduced. Does it not then become the British Government, is it not the duty of a Christian kingdom, to impart to their pagan subjects in India the blessings of the Gospel, which can alone completely civilize and humanize them, and which the above-mentioned Memoir shews to be perfectly practicable, if a sufficient Ecclesiastical Establishment is allowed to that country?

cruelty*. Yet all these prohibitions did not avail to preserve them entirely free from infection. They suffered themselves to be sometimes drawn into this prevailing and detestable crime, and "offered up their sons "and their daughters unto devils†." The baneful contagion spread like a pestilence over every part of Asia, Africa, and Europe. No climate, no government, no state of civilization, no mode of pagan superstition, was free from it. Even the Greeks and Romans, though less involved in this guilt than many other nations, were not altogether untainted with it. On great and extraordinary occasions, they had recourse to that which was esteemed the most valuable, the most efficacious, and most meritorious sacrifice that could be offered to the gods, the effusion of human blood‡. But among other more barbarous nations, it took a firmer and a wider root. The Scythians and Thracians, the Gauls

* Deut. xii. 29—32.

† Ps. cvi. 37.

‡ Plutarch, in the Lives of Themistocles, Marcellus, and Aristides. Livy, l. xxii. c. 57. Florus, l. i. c. 13. Procopius de Bell. Goth. l. ii. p. 38. Virg. Æn. x. 518. xi. 81.

Gauls and the Germans, were strongly addicted to it*; and even this island, where benevolence and humanity have now (thanks to the Gospel) fixed their seat; this island was, at one time, (under the gloomy and ferocious despotism of the Druids) polluted with the religious murder of its wretched inhabitants. The evil reached from one end of the globe to the other: and, on the first discovery of America, it was found that the southern hemisphere was even more deeply contaminated with this crime than the northern. In the midst of wealth, luxury, magnificence, and many of the polished arts of life, Montezuma offered twenty thousand human victims every year to the sun†. In one of the most powerful kingdoms of Africa‡ the same savage superstition still exists; and our own navigators found it established in every new discovered

* Herod. l. iv. Tacit. Annal. xiii. c. 57. De Moribus German. 9. Cæsar de Bell. Gall. l. vi. c. 15. 18. Histoire Philosophique et Politique, &c. vol. vi. p. 175. Maurice on India, p. 159.

† Introduction to Mickle's Translation of the Lusiad, p 7, note; and Robertson's Hist. of America, vol. iii. p. 199, and note 31.

‡ Kingdom of Dahomi.

discovered island throughout the whole extent of the vast Pacific Ocean*.

What a picture does this present to us of human nature unsubdued by grace, and of human reason (that is, of natural religion, or, as it is now by the courtesy of the times called, philosophy) unassisted by revelation. And what a deep and grateful sense ought it to impress on our minds, of the infinite obligations we owe to the Gospel, which has rescued us from this, as well as from the many other abominations, enormities, and cruelties of paganism. Wherever the divine light of Christianity broke forth, at that moment did this tremendous demon of superstition disappear. Human sacrifices are unknown in the Christian world, and "the land is no longer "defiled with blood."

* Cook's last Voyage, vol. ii. p. 203.

SEC-

SECTION III.

To a plain and a common understanding, the facts which have been adduced in the two preceding Sections would appear decisive in favour of the beneficent genius, and the divine origin, of our religion. But there is, it seems, a compendious and an easy way of getting rid of this sort of reasoning. The facts are admitted; but the inference drawn from them is denied. It is allowed, that those happy changes in the face of human affairs, which have been here specified, have actually taken place; but it is asserted, that they are not to be ascribed to the operation of evangelical principles and precepts. They are owing solely to the benign influence of A HUMANE PHILOSOPHY, and the gradual improvements of the human mind*.

I have already shewn in another place, that there

* Whoever is in the least conversant in the writings, either of foreign philosophers or of our own, need not be informed that this is their uniform doctrine; and that the beneficial effects of Philosophy, and the miseries produced by Christianity, are their constant and favourite topics.

there is not, and cannot be, the smallest truth in this bold assertion, which is perfectly gratuitous, and unsupported by the slightest proof*. But as it appears to me a matter of the very last importance to the honour and interest of our religion, that its claim to the sole, or at least to the principal merit of having alleviated the miseries, and advanced the happiness of mankind in the instances above adduced, should be fully and clearly made out, and established on the firmest ground; I must beg leave to add to the arguments already stated, the few following observations.

It is incumbent on the philosophers of the present day, to shew from whence they derive that humanity to which they now lay claim, and which, it seems, has produced such beneficial consequences. If they say from the cultivation of their minds, the improvement of their understanding, and the extent of their knowledge and erudition, it is, then, obvious to ask, how it comes to pass that these causes should not, in ancient times, have produced the same effects? How it comes to pass, that, before the appearance of the Gospel,

* Sermons, xii. & xiii. vol. i.

philosophy and humanity were perfect strangers to each other, though they are now, it seems, such close and intimate friends? If we should only say, that the philosophers of Greece and Italy were at least equal, both in natural sagacity and acquired learning, to the philosophers of modern Europe, we should not be thought to do the latter any great injustice. Yet not one of those great, and wise, and enlightened men of antiquity seems to have had any apprehension, that there was the least cruelty in a husband repudiating an irreproachable and affectionate wife from mere humour or caprice; in a father destroying his new-born infant, or putting his adult son to death; in a master torturing or murdering his servant for a trivial offence, or for none at all; in wretches being trained up to kill each other for the amusement of the spectators; in a victorious prince oppressing and enslaving a whole country from mere avarice or ambition; in putting a great part of his prisoners to the sword, and enslaving all the rest; nor, lastly, when the magnitude of the occasion seemed to require it, in offering up human sacrifices to the gods.

gods. So far from expressing (as far as I am able to recollect) a just detestation of these horrid practices, there were several of the most eminent philosophers, that expressly approved and recommended some of the worst of them. Aristotle particularly, and Plato, both gave a decided opinion in favour of destroying deformed or sickly infants*. We have already seen, that this execrable practice was even enjoined by Lycurgus, yet the humane Plutarch sees nothing unjust in *any* of his laws, and considers him as a completely perfect character†. Thucydides relates the massacre of two thousand Helots by the Lacedæmonians in cold blood, and a multitude of other shocking barbarities, committed during the Peloponnesian war, without one word of censure or disapprobation‡: and Livy describes innumerable scenes

* Aristotle, Pol. l. vii. c. 16. Plato de Rep. l. v. Plut. in Lyc.

† He appeals to the general *mildness* and *justice* of Lycurgus's character, as a proof that he was not the author of the Κρυπτια. He tells us that he was pronounced by the Oracle the beloved of God, and rather God than man, and that he was actually worshipped as a God by the Spartans. Plut. in Lyc.

‡ Thucyd. l. iv.

scenes of a similar nature, with the most perfect indifference and unconcern. Homer goes still further. He expressly approves and applauds the deliberate murder of all captives without distinction, even infants at the breast, and pronounces it to be *perfectly right and just**. And even Virgil, the tender, the elegant, and pathetic Virgil; he who, on other occasions, shews such exquisite feeling and sensibility, represents his hero as offering human sacrifices, without the smallest mark of horror or disgust†; and has not only selected the shocking punishment of the Alban dictator, as a proper and graceful ornament of the shield of Æneas, but has dwelt on the dreadful circumstances of it with an appearance of complacency and satisfaction, and seems even to exult in it, as a just retribution for the crime of the wretched sufferer. *At tu Dictis Albane Maneres*, Æn. viii. 642. It would be endless to enumerate instances of the same kind, which occur perpetually

* Il. l. vi. v. 62. αισιμα παρειπων. The poet seems even to have thought it an act of duty and of piety: for so the word αισιμος sometimes imports. See Scapula, Hesychius, Stephens, &c.

† Æn. x. 518. xi. 81. See also Iliad, xxiii. 175.

perpetually in the most distinguished writers of antiquity*, and which incontestably prove, that neither the brightest talents, nor the most successful cultivation of philosophy, of history, of eloquence, of poetry, of all those branches of literature which are properly called the *literæ humaniores*, and which are supposed to soften and humanize, and meliorate the heart, could in any degree subdue the unyielding stubbornness of PAGAN CRUELTY. On the contrary, it would be no difficult task to shew, that the more the ancients advanced in letters and the fine arts, and the more their communication and commerce with the different parts of the then known world was extended and enlarged, the more savage, oppressive, and tyrannical they became. And it is a fact no less remarkable, as

* Cicero applauds the twelve tables, though full of dreadful punishments, De Orat. i. 43, 44. and seems also, in some degree, to approve gladiatorial shows, while, at the same time, he relates one circumstance in these combats, which is enough to melt the most obdurate heart. "Mittunt etiam vulneribus confecti ad Dominos qui "quærant quid velint: si satisfactum iis non sit, *se* "*Velle Decumbere.*" Tusc. Quest. ii. 17. See also the extreme cruelty of the most humane characters in Terence. Heautontim. Act. iv. sc. i. v. 21.

as well as a proof no less decisive of the doctrine I have been endeavouring to establish, that, on the discovery of the new world, the same astonishing phenomenon presented itself, that we have just been noticing in the old. In the very heart of South America, an empire appeared which had made advances in government, in policy, in many useful and many ornamental arts, far beyond what could have been expected without the use of letters, and infinitely beyond all the surrounding nations of that country. And it appeared also, that these polished Mexicans (for it is to those I allude) exceeded their neighbours the Peruvians, and all the other Indian kingdoms, in fierceness and in cruelty, as much as they surpassed them in all the conveniences and improvements of social and civilized life*.

What shall we now say to the philosophy of the present age, which assumes to itself the exclusive merit of all the humanity and benevolence which are to be found in the world; and how shall we account for the striking contrast between the insensibility and hard-heartedness

* See one remarkable instance of this cruelty above, p. 396.

heartedness of the ancient philosophers, and those professions of gentleness and philanthropy which their brethren in our own times so ostentatiously display in their writings and their discourses? The only adequate and assignable reason of the difference is, that the latter have a source to draw from which was unknown to the former; that to the Gospel they are indebted for all their fine sentiments and declamations on the subject of benevolence; which, however, seem never to reach their hearts, or influence their conduct; for (as fatal experience has shewn) the moment they are possessed of power, they become the most inhuman of tyrants*.

2. Whoever considers, with any attention, the great leading principles, and characteristic precepts of the Christian Religion, will immediately perceive, that they are exactly such as would naturally produce (when not impeded by any accidental obstructions) those very effects which we ascribe to them. They seem to have been, as it were, purposely intended to *meet* and to correct all the violences and

* Witness what has passed for the last sixteen years in France. See also Rousseau's Works, 12°. v. viii. p. 10.

and cruelties of paganism, and more especially to afford protection and relief to the most oppressed and most helpless part of mankind, in all those instances where we have shewn, that power and authority were so grossly abused in the hands of the ancient heathens. Husbands, for instance, are enjoined "to love their wives, "and not to be bitter against them; fathers "are commanded not to provoke their chil-"dren to wrath, but to bring them up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord. "Masters are directed to give their slaves "what is just and equal; sovereigns to con-"sider themselves as the ministers of God "to men for good; soldiers to do violence "(needless violence) to no man; and they, "among others, are exhorted to love even their "enemies*." The *sacrifices* required of us are not those of our fellow-creatures, but of our own irregular appetites and passions; and, in general, in all the various relations and connections of civil and social life, we are commanded "to shew all meekness unto all men; "not to avenge ourselves, but rather give "place

* Col. iii. 19. Eph. vi. 4. Col. iv. 1. Rom. xiii. 6. Luke iii. 14.

"place unto wrath; to recompense to no man "evil for evil; to be of one accord, of one "mind, of one heart, and of one soul*."

These are evidently the sacred fountains from whence the various streams of benevolence, which, in Christian countries, now refresh and exhilarate the earth, have taken their rise. And if our philosophers can shew, that they have added one iota to the original stock of benevolence to be found in the Gospel, or advanced one single humane sentiment which is not either expressly or virtually comprehended in the Christian Revelation, they may then be allowed to arrogate some praise to themselves, on the score of their philanthropy. But till they can prove this, the claim of Christianity to all those happy changes in the face of human affairs, which have been here specified, stands unimpaired.

When our blessed Lord enjoins his disciples to love one another, he gave them what might well be called, A NEW COMMANDMENT. Before that time we have seen, that in many of the most essential articles of social life,

* Titus iii. 2. Rom. xii. 17. 19. Phil. ii. 2.

life, the predominant principle and practice of mankind was to hate and devour one another. *His* was the first complete code of humanity that was ever given to the world. THE GREAT ROYAL LAW OF CHARITY, which this Divine Legislator enacted, has never yet been improved upon by all the florid declamations of modern philosophers on the fashionable topic of benevolence. They can only, at the best, have the praise of ingenious and eloquent expositors; the true original text, to which we owe every thing of this sort, is the Gospel.

3. That this is a just and well-grounded conclusion, will appear, beyond all doubt, from an appeal to history and to fact. We find, that besides the silent and gradual influence of Christianity on the minds and manners of men, the first efforts that were made, and the first laws that were enacted, to restrain and check, and in several instances to annihilate at once, some of the most frightful inhumanities above mentioned, were the acts of *Christian* princes, and *Christian* legislators.

With respect to paternal power, the first Christian emperor, in order to prevent the destruction

destruction of grown children by their father, (a practice at that time too frequent) very wisely and humanely ordained, that the public should maintain the children of those who were unable to provide for them*.

In the year 319, he put an effectual stop to this horrible practice by making it a capital offence, and even affixing to it the punishment denounced against parricides†.

The exposure of infants, however, still prevailed. This he also restrained by an edict, in the year 331; and under the emperors Valentinian, Valens, and Gratian, this crime was made a capital offence‡.

Another branch of domestic tyranny, perpetual servitude, was, as a learned civilian observes, greatly discountenanced by the Christian Religion; and about the twelfth or thirteenth century, "when ecclesiastical legislation was at its height, is dated the extinction of slavery in Europe§."

The

* Taylor's Civil Law, p. 406. † Ibid.

‡ Ibid. p. 406.

§ Taylor, p. 435. Pope Alexander the Third declared, in the name of his council, that all Christians ought to be exempt from servitude. That law alone (says an historian not much disposed to speak well of

any

The first edict against gladiatorial shows, was by a Christian emperor; and Honorius afterwards completed what Constantine had begun. This horrid exhibition was by his laws finally abolished*.

To this we may add, that the savage punishment of crucifixion was also put an end to by Constantine†.

In these instances (and more might be produced) we see that some of the greatest miseries which oppressed mankind in the heathen world, were actually removed by the laws and edicts of CHRISTIAN RULERS‡. Here, then, there can be no doubt that the happy effects of these laws are to be ascribed solely and exclusively to the beneficent spirit of

any Christian legislator) ought to render his name dear to all the people of the earth. Volt. Un. Hist. vol. xx. p. 266. Ed. Amst. 12mo. 1764.

* Hist. of the Decline of the Roman Empire, vol. iii. p. 157. Jortin's Eccles. Rem. vol. iii. p. 220.

† Ib. p. 219.

‡ Even in the dark ages of popery, the wars of contending princes, and powerful lords, were frequently checked, and the fierceness of the times greatly mitigated by the authority, the remonstrances, and the influence of the clergy; particularly by what was called the TRUCE OF GOD, and other benevolent devices of that nature. Robertson's Charles V. vol. i. pp. 54. 64. 335, 336. 338.

of that heavenly religion, which meliorated the heart, and humanized the dispositions of those who made them. And we are therefore warranted in concluding, that many of the *other* great improvements in civil, social, and domestic life, which render our situation so infinitely superior to that of the ancient, as well as to the modern pagan world, are to be attributed to the operation of the same powerful cause.

If this important truth stood in need of any further confirmation, it is to be found in the confessions of those who are either the avowed enemies of Christianity, or at least have no unreasonable prejudices in its favour, to mislead their judgment.

They acknowledge, that "the pure and genuine influence of Christianity, may be traced in its beneficial, though imperfect effects, on the barbarian proselytes of the north;" and that on the fall of the Roman empire, it evidently mollified the ferocious temper of the conquerors*.

They acknowledge, that Constantine acted the part of a sound politician, in affording Christianity

* Decline of the Roman Empire, vol. iii. p. 688.

Christianity protection and support; because it not only tended to give firmness and solidity to his empire, but also to soften the ferocity of the armies, and to reform the licentiousness of the provinces; and by infusing a spirit of moderation and submission to government, to extinguish those principles of avarice and ambition, of injustice and violence, by which so many factions were formed, and the peace of the empire so often and so fatally broken*.

They acknowledge, in still more pointed and decisive terms, that no Religion ever appeared in the world, whose natural tendency was so much directed to promote the peace and happiness of mankind†.

They acknowledge, that Christianity, divested of all fanaticism, and better understood than in former ages, has rendered modern government less sanguinary, and given more gentleness to the manners of mankind.

They acknowledge, in fine, that these changes are *not owing to the cultivation of letters*, because, wherever they flourished the most, humanity was not the most regarded; but

* Bolingbroke, vol. iv. p. 438. † Ibid. pp. 281, 282.

but that from the Gospel numberless acts of mercy and kindness take their rise*.

Such are the acknowledgments of men of distinguished eminence in the world of letters, but certainly not much disposed to make needless concessions in favour of Christianity. And with these unsuspicious testimonies, added to the various facts that have been produced, we are enabled to estimate the respective merits, and to delineate, in a few words, the true characters of Philosophy and of Revelation.

We have seen that the predominant feature of paganism, or what is now called philosophy, (which is nothing more than paganism without idolatry) is CRUELTY in the extreme. All its steps are marked with blood. We have traced its ferocious temper in the civil policy, the laws, the domestic institutions, the wars, and even in the most solemn religious rites of the ancient heathen world. This was the case even among the most learned and most

* Rousseau, Emile, T. iii. l. 4. 12mo. Frank. p. 102. It is admirably well said by the same writer,—La Philosophie ne peut faire aucun bien, que la Religion ne le fasse encore mieux: et la Religion en fait beaucoup que la Philosophie ne sauroit faire. Ib. p. 101.

most *philosophical* nations of antiquity. But its aspect was still more dreadful among those whom they called barbarians, and it remains no less so among the savages of the present day, of which their cruelty to their women, their sanguinary and vindictive wars, the tortures they inflict on their prisoners, and their human sacrifices, are but too convincing proofs. In one of the most powerful kingdoms of Africa, where human sacrifices are sometimes offered, the object of their prince's worship is a TIGER*; a deity well suited to the worshippers, and a very fit emblem of the temper and disposition of Paganism. The whole countenance, indeed, of that religion is so strongly impressed with the features of that malignant being from whom it springs, that it is impossible to mistake its origin. It can have no other parent, than the parent of all evil, THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS.

In the Religion of Christ, on the other hand, we see a directly contrary spirit; a spirit of meekness, mercy, gentleness, humanity, and kindness, which has been for more

* See Mr. Norris's Evidence on the Slave Trade before the Privy Council, p. 5.

more than eighteen hundred years contending with the evils generated by paganism, has actually banished some of them from the face of the earth, has greatly mitigated and softened others, is gradually undermining all the rest, and has already given so different a colour to the whole system of human affairs, has introduced so large a portion of benevolence and mutual good-will into the minds and manners of men, into all the various relations of social, civil, and domestic life, as plainly shews the sacred source from whence it springs. Philosophy (both ancient and modern) is cruel, and could not be the author of such blessings as these. There could be but one author of them, THE GOD OF ALL CONSOLATION AND JOY.

So stands the comparison between Philosophy and the Gospel. And if, after all the proofs above adduced, any one should still affect to think that the portraits here drawn of them are the mere fictions of imagination, there is one means of conviction still remaining, which at this very hour forces itself on our observations, which in speaking on this subject it is impossible to pass over unnoticed,

and which it will not be easy for the most determined incredulity to withstand. Let the man who entertains these doubts (if such a one there can be) cast his eyes for a moment on each side of the narrow strait, which separates two of the greatest and most powerful nations in Europe. In one of these, PHILOSOPHY has usurped the THRONE of God; in the other, CHRISTIANITY has long established its empire. And it should seem as if (among other reasons) Providence had permitted the former to triumph, in a kingdom so near our own, almost on purpose to contrast together, to shew in the strongest possible light, and to force upon the very senses of mankind, the different spirit and the different effects of infidelity and religion. The scenes that have lately passed in one of these countries are well known. They are too horrible to relate, and too recent to be forgotten. The blessings experienced in the other are before our eyes, and I trust engraved on all our hearts. After contemplating both with due attention, let us then say, whether "*the tree* (planted on each of these neighbouring shores), *is not known*

*known by its fruit**:" whether the fruit of PHILOSOPHY is not now, what it always has been, *unrelenting cruelty;* and the fruit of the GOSPEL *unbounded benevolence and universal love.* Here, then, are the two great moral teachers and guides of life proposed to your choice: and as you approve the temper, and relish the actual effects, of the one, or of the other, decide between them.

* Matt. xii. 33.

APPENDIX;

CONTAINING

ADDITIONAL NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

(a) AMONG many others, Cato Minor, Cicero, and Augustus, were all highly culpable in this instance. But the brutal inhumanity of Pompey towards his wife, almost exceeds belief, and drew after it a long train of most tragical consequences. For the sake of connecting himself with Sylla, he repudiated his wife Antistia, and married Æmilia, the daughter-in-law of Sylla, and then living with her husband. Antistia's father had before been murdered on account of his attachment to Pompey; and her mother, shocked at the cruel treatment of her daughter, destroyed herself. Æmilia soon after died in child-bed in Pompey's house. Plut. in Pomp.

(b) It would be endless to produce all the instances we meet with in history, of the incredible barbarity of the ancients towards their

their slaves. The few that here follow, may serve as a specimen:

Two thousand Helots, who had been promised their freedom, and were led round the streets of Sparta in triumph with garlands on their heads, soon afterwards disappeared, and were never heard of more; but how they were destroyed no one ever knew. Thucyd. l. iv.

The youth of Sparta, it is well known, frequently lay in ambush for these wretched slaves in the night, and sallying out upon them unexpectedly, with daggers in their hands, murdered, in cold blood, every Helot they met with.

The Ephori also, as soon as they entered upon their office, *declared war against them in form*, that there might be the appearance of destroying them legally. Plut. in Lyc.

At the time when L. Domitius was prætor in Sicily, a slave happened to kill a boar of uncommon size. The prætor, struck with the account he had received of the man's dexterity and intrepidity, desired to see him. The poor wretch, overjoyed at this distinction, presented himself to the prætor, expecting, no doubt, applause and reward.

But Domitius understanding that he had killed the boar with a hunting spear, the use of which (as well as of all other arms) was forbidden to slaves, ordered him to be immediately *crucified*. The barbarity of this punishment is scarce more astonishing and atrocious than the perfect indifference and unconcern, with which the orator relates and reasons upon it. "*Durum hoc fortasse videatur; neque ego ullam in partem disputo.*" Cicero in Verrem Actio. ii. l. 5. c. 3.

It was the custom of Vedius Pollio, when his slaves had committed a fault, (sometimes a very trifling one) to order them to be thrown into his fish-ponds, to feed his lampreys. Seneca de Ira. iii. 40. Id. de Clement. i. 18. Plin. l. ix. c. 23.

A certain Roman being found murdered in his own house, all the slaves (to the number of 400) were instantly put to death. The historian adds that this was done, *Vetere de more*. Tacit. Annal. xiv. 43.

(d) Xenophon, in his treatise on the Athenian republic, acknowledges that the courts of justice were to be influenced by bribes; that they

they favoured and saved from punishment those to whom they were attached, and condemned those whom they hated. And in every instance it was the constant practice of the people, both at Athens and in the dependent States, to oppress the virtuous and encourage the most abandoned, as much as possible.

Thucydides assures us, (l. vi.) that the Athenians frequently thrust into prison, and condemned to death, the very best citizens, on the information of the most worthless and profligate.

With respect to Rome, the following facts will give the reader a faint idea of the manner in which justice was there administered.

When L. Gellius and C. Lentulus were censors, they expelled no less than sixty-four senators for taking bribes in their judicial capacity. Middleton's Life of Cicero, vol. i. p. 117. Pighii Annal. A. U. 683.

The method which Pompey took to restore order and decorum in the Roman courts of judicature, was of a sort which would occasion no small surprise in Westminster-Hall. He presided there in person *with a file of soldiers.* And

And yet, notwithstanding this prudent care to preserve the decorum and purity of judicial proceedings, he was not extremely scrupulous and delicate when his own friends were concerned. For when Scipio, his father-in-law, was impeached, he sent for the three hundred and sixty judges to his house, and implored their friendship to Scipio. (Plut. in Pomp.) Yet this is the man whom Cicero calls *Hominem integrum et castum et gravem.* Epist. ad Attic. xi. 6.

Such were the ideas which Cicero entertained of *judicial integrity.* And most of the great men of Rome seem to have entertained the same. For when Catiline was tried for some atrocious murders, many of the consulars appeared in his favour, and gave him an excellent character. And Cicero himself, on a similar occasion, was once disposed to have undertaken his defence. Epist. ad Attic. l. i. & l. ii.

(e) The Athenians (says an historian who knew them well) were formed by nature *never to be at rest* themselves, nor to allow others to be so. Thucyd. l. i.

The war against Syracuse, which led to their ruin,

ruin, was founded in extreme injustice and ambition. The design of the Athenians was first to subdue Sicily, then Italy, then the Peloponnesus. Ib. l. vi.

They thought it the *natural turn* of the human mind to grasp at dominion whenever it could be done. They confessed that they acted on this principle themselves, and supposed all other nations did the same. Ib. l. v.

They thought the shortest road to empire was to assist those that demanded their protection, without minutely inquiring how well they deserved it. Ib.

The Spartans, among one another, gave ample proofs of honour and virtue: but with respect to the rest of the world, their rule of acting was to consider as honourable whatever was pleasing to them; and as just whatever was conducive to their interest. Ib.

Let the reader also refer to the shameful perfidy of Posthumius to the Samnites, in Livy, l. ix. c. 5. and 11. and of Æmilius to Perseus, l. xlv. c. 8. 39.

(f) No less than seventy cities of Epirus were given up by Æmilius Paulus to be pillaged

pillaged by the soldiers in one day, and at the same time 150,000 of the inhabitants were made slaves. Livy, l. xlv. 2. 34. Polybius informs us, l. x. frag. 2. that when Scipio took Carthage, he ordered his soldiers to attack the inhabitants, and put them all to death without distinction, and to spare none, *according to the custom of the Romans.* The historian adds, that the Romans did this to strike all nations with the terror of their name. And for the same reason he says, whenever they take a town, you not only see all the men put to death, but dogs and other animals cut to pieces, and their limbs scattered about the streets.

It is said of Julius Cæsar, that he had subdued three hundred nations, stormed a thousand cities, made a million of slaves, and put as many to the sword, either in the field or in towns. (Plut. in Pompeio.) Yet this general was celebrated for his great humanity.

During the siege of Jerusalem, and in the course of the Jewish war, the number of Jews that perished by the sword, was one million three hundred and fifty-seven thousand, six hundred and sixty; and the number of

captives was ninety-seven thousand. Those under seventeen years of age were sold for slaves; those above seventeen were sent to the works in Egypt, or dispersed through the Roman provinces to be destroyed by the sword or by wild beasts, and eleven thousand of them perished by hunger. Even Titus, the mild and merciful Titus, the *deliciæ humani generis*, treated those wretched beings with the most savage barbarity. In the shows and spectacles which he exhibited at Cæsarea, many of the captives were destroyed, some by wild beasts, and others were compelled to fight with each other. At the same place, in honour of his brother's birth-day, fifteen hundred Jews were slain, and a great number also at Berytus, in honour of his father. The same was done in other cities of Syria. Those whom he reserved for his triumph, were Simeon and John, and seven hundred others of remarkable stature and beauty*.

* Newton's Dissert. on Prophecy—Diss. 20. Part 3. vol. ii. p. 313.

A

SUMMARY

OF THE

PRINCIPAL EVIDENCES

FOR THE

TRUTH AND DIVINE ORIGIN

OF THE

CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

THE THIRTEENTH EDITION.

ON THE

TRUTH AND DIVINE ORIGIN

OF THE

CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

THE method I intend to pursue in this Treatise is, to present to my readers the following series of PROPOSITIONS, and then to prove distinctly the truth of each.

I. From considering the state of the heathen world, before the appearance of our Lord upon earth, it is evident that there was an absolute necessity for a revelation of God's will, and of course, a great probability beforehand that such a revelation would be granted.

II. At the very time when there was a general expectation in the world of some extraordinary personage making his appearance in it, a person called Jesus Christ did actually appear

appear upon earth, asserting that he was the Son of God, and that he was sent from heaven to teach mankind true religion; and he did accordingly found a religion, which from him was called THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, and which has been professed by great numbers of people from that time to the present.

III. The books of the New Testament were written by those persons to whom they are ascribed, and contain a faithful history of Christ and his religion: and the account there given of both, may be securely relied upon as strictly true.

IV. The scriptures of the Old Testament (which are connected with those of the New) are the genuine writings of those whose names they bear; and give a true account of the Mosaic dispensation, of the historical facts, the divine commands, the moral precepts, and the prophecies which they contain.

V. The character of Christ, as represented in the gospels, affords very strong ground for believing that he was a divine person.

 VI. The

VI. The sublimity of his doctrines and the purity of his moral precepts confirm this belief.

VII. The rapid and successful propagation of the gospel by the first teachers of it, through a large part of the world, is a proof that they were favoured with divine assistance and support.

VIII. A comparison betwixt Christ and Mahomet, and their respective religions, leads us to conclude, that as the religion of the latter was confessedly the invention of man, that of the former was derived from God.

IX. The predictions delivered by the ancient prophets, and fulfilled in our Saviour, shew that he was the Messiah expected by the Jews, and that he came into the world by divine appointment, to be the great deliverer and redeemer of mankind.

X. The prophecies delivered by our Saviour himself, prove that he was endued with the foreknowledge of future events, which belongs only to God and to those inspired by him.

XI. The

XI. The miracles performed by our Lord demonstrate him to have possessed divine power.

XII. The resurrection of our Lord from the dead, is a fact fully proved by the clearest evidence, and is the seal and confirmation of his divinity, and of the truth of his religion.

THESE are the several points I shall undertake to prove in the following pages: and if these are clearly made out, there can be nothing more wanting to satisfy every reasonable man, that the Christian Religion is a true revelation from God.

PRO-

PROPOSITION I.

FROM considering the state of the Heathen world, before the appearance of our Lord upon earth, it is evident that there was an absolute necessity for a Divine Revelation of God's will, and, of course, a great probability beforehand, that such a Revelation would be granted.

THEY who are acquainted with ancient history, know perfectly well that there is no one fact more certain and more notorious than this: That for many ages before our Saviour appeared upon earth, and at the time he actually did appear, the whole heathen world, even the politest and most civilized, and most learned nations, were, with a very few exceptions, sunk in the most deplorable ignorance of every thing relating to God and to religion; in the grossest superstition and idolatry, and in the most abominable corruption and depravity of manners. They neither understood the true nature of God, nor the attributes and perfections which belong to him, nor the worship that was acceptable

to him, nor the moral duties which he required from his creatures; nor had they any clear notions or firm belief of the immortality of the soul, and a state of rewards and punishments in another life. They believed the world to be under the direction of a vast multitude of gods and goddesses, to whom they ascribed the worst passions and the worst vices that ever disgraced human nature. They worshipped also dead men and women, birds and beasts, insects and reptiles, (especially that most odious and disgusting reptile, the serpent) together with an infinite number of idols, the work of their own hands, from various materials, gold, silver, wood, and stone. With respect to their own conduct, they were almost universally addicted to the most shocking and abominable vices; even many of their solemn religious ceremonies and acts of devotion were scenes of the grossest sensuality and licentiousness. Others of them were attended with the most savage and cruel superstitions, and sometimes even with human sacrifices.

The description given of the ancient pagans by St. Paul, in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, is strictly and literally true:—

"They

"They were filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, uncleanness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things; disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."

These are not the mere general declamations of a pious man against the wickedness of the times; they are faithful and exact pictures of the manners of the age, and they are fully and amply confirmed by contemporary heathen writers. They are applied also to a people, highly civilized, ingenious, learned, and celebrated for their proficiency in all liberal arts and sciences. What, then, must have been the depravity of the most barbarous nations, when such were the morals of the most polite and virtuous?

There were, it is true, among all the ancient nations, and especially among the Greeks and Romans, some wise and comparatively good men, called philosophers, who had juster notions of morality and religion than the rest

 of

of the world, and preserved themselves to a certain degree unpolluted by the general corruption of the times. But these were few in proportion to the great bulk of mankind, and were utterly unable to produce any considerable change in the prevailing principles and manners of their countrymen. They themselves had but very imperfect and erroneous notions respecting the nature and attributes of God, the worship he required, the duties and obligations of morality, the method of God's governing the world, his design in creating mankind, the original dignity of human nature, the state of corruption and depravity into which it afterwards fell; the particular mode of divine interposition necessary for the recovery of the human race; the means of regaining the favour of their offended Maker, and the glorious end to which God intended finally to conduct them. Even with respect to those great and important doctrines above mentioned, the immortality of the soul, the reality of a future state, and the distribution of rewards and punishments hereafter, they were full of doubt, uncertainty, and hesitation; and rather ardently wished and

hoped

hoped for, than confidently expected and believed them. But even what they *did* know with any degree of clearness and certainty, they either would not condescend, or wanted the ability to render plain and intelligible to the lower orders of the people. They were destitute also of proper authority to enforce the virtues they recommended; they had no motives to propose powerful enough to overrule strong temptations and corrupt inclinations: their own example, instead of recommending their precepts, tended to counteract them; for it was generally (even in the very best of them) in direct opposition to their doctrines; and the detestable vices to which many of them were addicted, entirely destroyed the efficacy of what they taught.

Above all, they were destitute of those awful sanctions of religion, which are the most effectual restraints on the passions and vices of mankind, and the most powerful incentives to virtue—the rewards and punishments of a future state; which form so essential and important a part of the christian dispensation.

There was therefore a plain and absolute necessity for a divine revelation, to rescue

 mankind

mankind from that gulf of ignorance, superstition, idolatry, wickedness, and misery, in which they were almost universally sunk; to teach them in what manner, and with what kind of external service, God might most acceptably be worshipped, and what expiation he would accept for sin; to give them a full assurance of a future state and a future judgment; to make the whole doctrine of religion clear and obvious to all capacities; to add weight and authority to the plainest precepts, and to furnish men with extraordinary and supernatural assistance, to enable them to overcome the corruptions of their nature. And since it was also plainly worthy of God, and consonant to all our ideas of his goodness, mercy, and compassion to the work of his own hands, that he should thus enlighten, and assist, and direct the creatures he had made, there was evidently much ground to expect that such information and assistance would be granted; and the wisest of the ancient heathens themselves thought it most natural and agreeable to right reason to hope for something of this nature.

You may give over, says Socrates, all hopes of

of amending men's manners for the future, unless God be pleased to send you some other person to instruct you*; and Plato declares, that whatever is right, and as it should be in the present evil state of the world, can be so only by the *particular interposition of God*†. Cicero has made similar declarations; and Porphyry, who was a most inveterate enemy to the christian religion, yet confesses, that there was wanting *some universal method of delivering men's souls, which no sect of philosophy had ever yet found out*‡.

These confessions of the great sages of antiquity, infinitely outweigh the assertions of our modern infidels, "that human reason is fully sufficient to teach man his duty, and enable him to perform it; and that, therefore, a divine revelation was perfectly needless." It is true, that in the present times a deist may have tolerably just notions of the nature and attributes of the Supreme Being, of the worship due to him, of the ground and extent of moral obligation, and even of a future state

* Plato in Apolog. Socratis. † Plato de Rep.
‡ Augustin. de Civitate Dei. l. x. c. 32.

state of retribution. But from whence does he derive these notions? Not from the dictates of his own unassisted reason, but (as the philosophist Rousseau himself confesses*) from those very Scriptures which he despises and reviles, from the early impressions of education, from living and conversing in a christian country, where those doctrines are publicly taught, and where, in spite of himself, he imbibes some portion of that religious knowledge which the sacred writings have every where diffused and communicated to the *enemies* as well as the friends of the gospel. But they who were destitute of these advantages, they who had nothing but reason to direct them, and therefore knew what reason is capable of doing, when left to itself, much better than any modern infidel (who never was, and never can be, precisely in the same predicament;) these men uniformly declare, that the mere light of nature was *not* competent to conduct them into the road of happiness and virtue; and that the only *sure and certain guide* to carry men well through this life,

* Vol. ix. p. 71. 12mo. 1764.

life, *was a divine discovery of the truth**. These considerations may serve to shew, that, instead of entertaining any unreasonable prejudices beforehand against the possibility or probability of any divine revelation whatever, we ought, on the contrary, to be previously prepossessed in favour of it, and to be prepared and open to receive it with candour and fairness, whenever it should come supported with sufficient evidence: because, from considering the wants of man and the mercy of God, it appears highly probable, that such a revelation would *some time or other* be vouchsafed to mankind.

* Plato in Phædone.

PRO-

PROPOSITION II.

At the very time when there was a general expectation in the world of some extraordinary Personage making his appearance in it, a person, called Jesus Christ, did actually appear upon earth, asserting that he was the Son of God, and that he came from heaven to teach Mankind true Religion, and he did accordingly found a Religion, which from him was called the Christian Religion, and which has been professed by great numbers of people from that time to the present.

It was necessary just to state this proposition, as the foundation of all the reasoning that is to follow; but the truth of it is so universally acknowledged, that it requires but very few words to be said in support of it.

That there was, about the time of our Saviour's birth, a general expectation spread over the eastern part of the world, that some very extraordinary person would appear in Judæa, is evident both from the sacred history and from pagan writers. St. Matthew inform

informs us, that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, there came wise men (probably men of considerable rank and learning in their own country) from the East, saying, "Where is he that is born King of the Jews; for we have seen his star in the East, and are come to worship him?" In confirmation of this, two Roman historians, Suetonius and Tacitus, assert, that there prevailed at that time, over the whole East, an ancient and fixed opinion, that there should arise out of Judæa a person who should obtain dominion over the world.

That, at this time, when Augustus Cæsar was emperor of Rome, a person called Jesus Christ was actually born in Judæa; that he professed to come from heaven to teach mankind true religion, and that he had a multitude of followers; the sacred historians unanimously affirm, and several heathen authors also bear testimony to the same facts. They mention the very name of Christ, and acknowledge that he had a great number of disciples, who from him were called Christians. The Jews, though professed enemies to our religion, acknowledge these things to be true; and none

none even of the earliest pagans who wrote against Christianity, ever pretended to question their reality. These things, therefore, are as certain and undeniable as ancient history, both sacred and profane, and the concurrent testimony both of friends and enemies can possibly make them.

PROPOSITION III.

THE Books of the New Testament were written by those persons to whom they are ascribed, and contain a faithful history of Christ and his Religion: and the account there given of both, may be securely relied upon as strictly true.

THE books which contain the history of Christ and of the christian religion, are the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. That the Gospels were written by the persons whose names they bear, namely, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, there is no more reason to doubt, than that the histories which we have under the names of Xenophon, Livy, or Tacitus, were written by those authors.

A great many passages are alluded to or quoted from the evangelists, exactly as we read them now, by a regular succession of christian writers, from the time of the apostles down to this hour: and at a very early period their names are mentioned as the authors of their respective gospels; which is more

more than can be said for any other ancient historian whatever*.

These books have always been considered by the whole christian world, from the apostolic age, as containing a faithful history of their religion, and therefore they ought to be received as such; just as we allow the Koran to contain a genuine account of the Mahometan religion, and the sacred books of the Bramins to contain a true representation of the Hindoo religion.

That all the facts related in these writings, and the accounts given of every thing our Saviour said and did, are also strictly true, we have the most substantial grounds for believing:

For, in the first place, the writers had the very best means of information, and could not possibly be deceived themselves;

And, in the next place, they could have no conceivable inducement for imposing upon others.

St. Matthew and St. John were two of our Lord's apostles; his constant companions and attendants throughout the whole of his ministry.

* Lardner's Credibility, b. i.; Paley's Evidences, vol. i.

ministry. They were actually present at the scenes which they describe; eye-witnesses of the facts, and ear-witnesses of the discourses which they relate.

St. Mark and St. Luke, though not themselves apostles, yet were the contemporaries and companions of apostles, and in habits of society and friendship with those who had been present at the transactions which they record. St. Luke expressly says this in the beginning of his gospel, which opens with these words: "Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed amongst us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were *eye-witnesses and ministers of the word;* it seemed good to *me* also, *having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first*, to write unto thee, in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the *certainty* of those things wherein thou hast been instructed." St. Luke also being the author of the Acts of the Apostles, we have, for the writers of these five books, persons who had the most *perfect knowledge* of every thing they relate, either from

from their own personal observation, or from immediate communications with those who saw and heard every thing that passed.

They could not, therefore, be themselves deceived; nor could they have the least inducement, or the least inclination, to deceive others.

They were plain, honest, artless, unlearned men, in very humble occupations of life, and utterly incapable of inventing or carrying on such a refined and complicated system of fraud, as the christian religion must have been if it was not true. There are, besides, the strongest marks of fairness, candour, simplicity, and truth, throughout the whole of their narratives. Their greatest enemies have never attempted to throw the least stain upon their characters; and how then can they be supposed capable of so gross an imposition as that of asserting and propagating the most impudent fictions? They could gain by it neither pleasure, profit, nor power. On the contrary, it brought upon them the most dreadful evils, and even death itself. If, therefore, they were cheats, they were cheats without any motive, and without any advantage; nay,

nay, contrary to every motive and every advantage that usually influence the actions of men. They preached a religion which forbids falsehood under pain of eternal punishment, and yet, on this supposition, they supported that religion by falsehood; and whilst they were guilty of the basest and most useless knavery themselves, they were taking infinite pains, and going through the greatest labour and sufferings, in order to teach honesty to all mankind.

Is this credible? Is this possible? Is not this a mode of acting so contrary to all experience, to all the principles of human nature, and to all the usual motives of human conduct, as to exceed the utmost bounds of belief, and to compel every reasonable man to reject at once so monstrous a supposition?

The facts, therefore, related in the Gospels, and in the Acts of the Apostles, even those evidently miraculous, *must* be true; for the testimony of those who *die* for what they assert, is evidence sufficient to support *any* miracle whatever. And this opinion of their veracity is strongly confirmed by the following considerations:

 There

There are, in all the sacred writings of the New Testament, continual allusions and references to things, persons, places, manners, customs, and opinions, which are found to be perfectly conformable to the real state of things at that time, as represented by disinterested and contemporary writers. Had their story been a forgery, they would certainly have been detected in some mistake or other, concerning these incidental circumstances, which yet they have never once been.

Then, as to the facts themselves which they relate, great numbers of them are mentioned and related both by Jewish and Roman historians; such as the star that appeared at our Saviour's birth, the journey of the wise men to Bethlehem, Herod's murder of the infants under two years old, many particulars concerning John the Baptist and Herod, the crucifixion of our Lord under Pontius Pilate, and the earthquake and miraculous darkness which attended it. Nay, even many of the miracles which Jesus himself wrought, particularly the curing the lame and blind, and casting out devils, are, as to the *matters of fact*, expressly owned and admitted, by several of

the

the earliest and most implacable enemies of christianity. For though they ascribed these miracles to the assistance of evil spirits, yet they allowed that the miracles themselves were actually wrought*.

This testimony of our adversaries, even to the miraculous parts of the sacred history, is the strongest possible confirmation of the truth and authority of the whole.

It is also certain, that the books of the New Testament have come down to the present times without any material alteration or corruption; and that they are, in all essential points, the same as they came from the hands of their authors.

That in the various transcripts of these writings, as in all other ancient books, a few letters, syllables, or even words, may have been changed, we do not pretend to deny; but that there has been any designed or fraudulent corruption of any considerable part, especially of any doctrine, or any important passage of history, no one has ever attempted, or been able, to prove. Indeed it was absolutely impossible. There can be no doubt but

* Clarke's Evidences of Nat. and Rev. Religion.

 that,

that, as soon as any of the original writings came out of the hands of their authors, great numbers of copies were immediately taken, and sent to all the different christian churches. We know that they were publicly read in the religious assemblies of the first christians. We know, also, that they were very soon translated into a variety of foreign languages, and these ancient versions (many of which still remain) were quickly dispersed into all parts of the known world; nay, even several of the original manuscripts remained to the time of Tertullian, at the end of the second century*. There are numberless quotations from every part of the New Testament by christian writers, from the earliest ages down to the present, all which substantially agree with the present text of the sacred writings. Besides which, a variety of sects and heresies soon arose in the christian church, and each of these appealed to the Scriptures for the truth of their doctrines. It would, therefore, have been utterly impossible for any one sect to have made any material alteration in the sacred books, without being immediately detected

* Grotius de Ver. l. iii. s. 2.

detected and exposed by all the others*. Their mutual jealousy and suspicion of each other would effectually prevent any gross adulteration of the sacred volumes; and with respect to lesser matters, the best and most able critics have, after the most minute examination, asserted and proved, that the holy scriptures of the New Testament have suffered less from the injury of time, and the errors of transcribers, than any other ancient writings whatsoever†.

* Beattie, vol. i. p. 188.

† The style, too, of the gospel (says the amiable and elegant author of the Minstrel) bears intrinsic evidence of its truth. We find there no appearance of artifice or of party spirit; no attempt to exaggerate on the one hand, or depreciate on the other; no remarks thrown in to anticipate objections; nothing of that caution which never fails to distinguish the testimony of those who are conscious of imposture; no endeavour to reconcile the reader's mind to what may be extraordinary in the narrative; all is fair, candid, and simple. The historians make no reflections of their own, but confine themselves to matter of fact, that is, to what they heard and saw; and honestly record their own mistakes and faults, as well as the other particulars of the story. *Beattie's Evidences*, vol. i. p. 89.

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PROPOSITION IV.

THE Scriptures of the Old Testament, which are connected with those of the New, are the genuine Writings of those whose names they bear, and give a true account of the Mosaic Dispensation, as well as of the Historical Facts, the Divine Commands, the Moral Precepts, and the Prophecies which they contain.

THAT part of the Bible, which is called the Old Testament, contains a great variety of very different compositions, some historical, some poetical, some moral and preceptive, some prophetical; written at different times, and by different persons, and collected into one volume by the care of the Jews.

That these books were all written by those whose names they bear, there is not the least reasonable ground to doubt; they have been always considered as the writings of those persons by the whole Jewish nation, (who were most interested in their authenticity, and most likely to know the truth,) from the earliest times down to the present: and no proof to the contrary has ever yet been produced.

That

That these writings have come down to us in the same state in which they were originally written, as to all essential points, there is every reason to believe. The original manuscripts were long preserved among the Jews. A copy of the book of the law was preserved in the ark; it was ordered to be read publicly every seven years, at the feast of the tabernacles, as well as privately, and frequently, in every Jewish family.

There is a copy still extant of the five books of Moses (which are called the Pentateuch) taken by the Samaritans, who were bitter enemies to the Jews, and always at variance with them; and this copy agrees, in every material instance, with the Jewish copy.

Near three hundred years before Christ, these scriptures were translated into Greek, and this version (called the Septuagint) agrees also in all essential articles with the Hebrew original. This being very widely spread over the world, rendered any considerable alteration extremely difficult: and the dispersion of the Jews into all the different regions of the globe, made it next to impossible.

The Jews were always remarkable for being most

most faithful guardians of their sacred books, which they transcribed repeatedly, and compared most carefully with the originals, and of which they even numbered the words and letters. That they have not corrupted any of their prophetical writings appears from hence: that we prove Jesus to be the Messiah from many of those very prophecies which they have themselves preserved; and which (if their invincible fidelity to their sacred books had not restrained them) their hatred to Christianity would have led them to alter or to suppress. And their credit is still further established by this circumstance, that our Saviour, though he brings many heavy charges against the scribes and Pharisees, yet never once accuses them of corrupting or falsifying any one of their sacred writings.

It is no less certain that these writings give a true and faithful account of the various matters which they contain. Many of the principal facts and circumstances related in them, are mentioned by the most ancient heathen authors. The first origin and creation of the world out of chaos, as described by Moses; the formation of the sun, the moon, and the

stars, and afterwards of man himself; the dominion given him over other animals; the completion of this great work in six days; the destruction of the world by a deluge; the circumstances of the ark and the dove; the punishment of Sodom by fire; the ancient rite of circumcision; many particulars relating to Moses, the giving of the law, and the Jewish ritual; the names of David and Solomon, and their leagues with the Tyrians; these things, and many others of the same sort, are expressly mentioned, or plainly alluded to, in several pagan authors of the highest antiquity and the best credit. And a very bitter enemy of the Jews as well as christians, the emperor Julian, is, by the force of evidence, compelled to confess, that there were many persons among the Jews divinely inspired; and that fire from heaven descended on the sacrifices of Moses and Elijah. Add to this, that the references made to the books of the Old Testament, and the passages quoted from them by our Saviour and his apostles, is a plain proof, that they acknowledged the authority of those writings, and the veracity of their authors.

It

It is true indeed, that in the historical books of the Old Testament, there are some bad characters and bad actions recorded, and some very cruel deeds described; but these things are mentioned as mere historical facts, and by no means approved or proposed as examples to others. And excepting these passages, which are comparatively few in number, the rest of those sacred books, more especially Deuteronomy, the Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Prophets, are full of very sublime representations of God and his attributes; of very excellent rules for the conduct of life, and examples of almost every virtue that can adorn human nature. And these things were written at a time when all the rest of the world, even the wisest and most learned, and most celebrated nations of the earth, were sunk in the grossest ignorance of God and religion; were worshipping idols and brute beasts, and indulging themselves in the most abominable vices. It is a most singular circumstance, that a people in a remote, obscure corner of the world, very inferior to several heathen nations in learning, in philosophy, in genius, in science, and all the polite arts,

arts, should yet be so infinitely their superiors in their ideas of the Supreme Being, and in every thing relating to morality and religion. This can no otherwise be accounted for, than on the supposition of their having been instructed in these things by God himself, or by persons commissioned and inspired by him; that is, of their having been really favoured with those divine revelations, which are recorded in the books of the Old Testament.

With respect to the prophecies which they contain, the truth of a great part of these has been infallibly proved by the exact fulfilment of them in subsequent ages, such as those relating to our Saviour (which will be hereafter specified) to Babylon, to Egypt, to Edom, to Tyre and Sidon. But those which refer more particularly to the dispersion of the Jews are so very numerous and clear, and the accomplishment of them, in the present state of the Jews, is a fact which obtrudes itself, at this moment, so irresistibly upon our senses, that I cannot forbear presenting to the reader some of the most remarkable of those predictions, as they are drawn together by a most able writer.

It

It was foretold by Moses, that when the Jews forsook the true God, "they should be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, should be scattered among the heathen, among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; should become an astonishment, a proverb, and a bye-word among all nations; and that among those nations they should find no ease, neither should the sole of their foot have rest; but the Lord should give them a trembling heart, and fading of eyes, and sorrow of mind, and send a faintness into their hearts in the land of their enemies; so that the sound of a shaken leaf should chase them*."

The same things are continually predicted through all the following prophets: "That God would disperse them through the countries of the heathen; that he would sift them among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve; that in all the kingdoms of the earth, whither they should be driven, they should be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, and an astonishment and a hissing; and

* Deut. xxviii. 25. Lev. xxvi. 33. Deut. iv. 27. Deut. xxviii. 37. 64, 65. Lev. xxvi. 36.

and that they should abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim*."

Had any thing like this, in the time of Moses, or of the prophets, ever happened to any nation in the world? Or was there in nature any probability that any such thing should ever happen to any people? That when they were conquered by their enemies, and led into captivity, they should neither continue in the place of their captivity, nor be swallowed up and lost among their conquerors, but be scattered among all the nations of the world, and hated and persecuted by all nations for many ages, and yet continue a distinct people? Or could any description of the Jews written at this day, be a more exact and lively picture of the state they have now been in for many ages, than these prophetic descriptions, especially that of Moses, given more than 3,000 years ago†?

* Ezek. xx. 13. xi. 15. Amos, ix. 9. Jer. xxiv. 9. Jer. xxix. 18. Hosea, iii. 4.

† Clarke's Evidences, pp. 176. 277.

PRO-

PROPOSITION V.

THE character of Christ, as represented in the Gospels, affords very strong ground for believing that he was a Divine Person.

WHOEVER considers with attention the character of our blessed Lord, as it may be collected from the various incidents and actions of his life, (for there are no laboured descriptions of it, no encomiums upon it, by his own disciples) will soon discover that it was, in every respect, the most perfect that ever was made known to mankind. If we only say of him what even Pilate said of him, and what his bitterest enemies cannot and do not deny, *that we can find no fault in him*, and that the whole tenor of his life was entirely blameless throughout, this is more than can be said of any other person that ever came into the world. But this is going a very little way indeed in the excellence of his character. He was not only free from every failing,

failing, but possessed and practised every imaginable virtue. Towards his heavenly Father he expressed the most ardent love, the most fervent yet rational devotion, and displayed in his whole conduct the most absolute resignation to his will, and obedience to his commands. His manners were gentle, mild, condescending, and gracious: his heart overflowed with kindness, compassion, and tenderness to the whole human race. The great employment of his life was to do good to the bodies and souls of men. In this all his thoughts and all his time were constantly and almost incessantly occupied. He went about dispensing his blessings to all around him in a thousand different ways; healing diseases, relieving infirmities, correcting errors, removing prejudices, promoting piety, justice, charity, peace, harmony among men, and crowding into the narrow compass of his ministry, more acts of mercy and compassion than the longest life of the most benevolent man upon earth ever yet produced. Over his own passions he had obtained the most complete command; and though his patience was continually put

to the severest trials, yet he was never once overcome, never once betrayed into any intemperance or excess in word or deed, "never once spake unadvisedly with his lips." He endured the cruellest insults from his enemies with the utmost composure, meekness, patience, and resignation; displayed the most astonishing fortitude under a most painful and ignominious death; and, to crown all, in the very midst of his torments on the cross, implored forgiveness for his murderers in that divinely charitable prayer, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Nor was his wisdom inferior to his virtues. The doctrines he taught were the most sublime and the most important that were ever before delivered to mankind, and every way worthy of that God, from whom he professed to derive them, and whose Son he declared himself to be.

His precepts inculcated the purest and most perfect morality; his discourses were full of dignity and wisdom, yet intelligible and clear; his parables conveyed instruction in the most pleasing, familiar, and impressive manner;

and

and his answers to the many insidious questions that were put to him, shewed uncommon quickness of conception, soundness of judgment, and presence of mind, completely baffled all the artifices and malice of his enemies, and enabled him to elude all the snares that were laid for him. It appears then, even from this short and imperfect sketch of our Saviour's character, that he was, beyond comparison, the wisest and most virtuous person that ever appeared; and even his bitterest enemies allow that he was so. If, then, he was confessedly so great and so good a man, it unavoidably follows that he must be, what he pretended to be, a Divine Person, and of course his religion also must be divine: for he certainly laid claim to a divine original. He asserted, that he was the Son of God; that he and his religion came from heaven; and that he had the power of working miracles. If this was not the case, he must, in a matter of infinite importance, have asserted what had no foundation in truth. But is such a supposition as this in the smallest degree credible? Is it probable, is it conceivable, is it

consistent with the general conduct of man, is it reconcileable with the acknowledged character of our Lord, to suppose, that any thing *but* truth could proceed from him whom his very enemies allow to have been in *every* respect (and of course in point of veracity) the best and most virtuous of men? Was it ever known, is there a single instance to be produced in the history of mankind, of any one so unblemished in morals as Christ confessedly was, persisting, for so great a length of time as he did, in assertions, which, if untrue, would be repugnant to the clearest principles of morality, and most fatal in their consequences to those he loved best, his followers and his friends? Is it possible, that the pure, the upright, the pious, the devout, the meek, the gentle, the humane, the merciful Jesus, could engage multitudes of innocent and virtuous people, in the belief and support of a religion which he knew must draw on them persecution, misery and death, unless he had been authorized by God himself to establish that religion; and unless he was conscious that he possessed the power of

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amply recompensing those who preferred his religion to every other consideration? The common sense and common feelings of mankind must revolt at such a preposterous idea.

It follows, then, that Christ was, in truth, a divine teacher, and his religion the gift of God.

PROPOSITION VI.

THE Sublimity of our Lord's Doctrines, and the Purity of his moral Precepts, confirm the Belief of his Divine Mission.

THERE is no where to be found such important information, and such just and noble sentiments concerning God and religion, as in the scriptures of the New Testament.

They teach us, in the first place, that there is one Almighty Being, who created all things, of infinite power, wisdom, justice, mercy, goodness; that he is the governor and preserver of this world, which he has made; that his providential care is over all his works; and that he more particularly regards the affairs and conduct of men. They teach us, that we are to worship this great Being in spirit and in truth; and that the love of him is the first and great commandment, the source and spring of all virtue. They teach us more particularly how to pray to him, and for that purpose supply us with a form of prayer, called the Lord's Prayer, "which is a model

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of calm and rational devotion, and which, for its conciseness, its clearness, its suitableness to every condition, and for the weight, solemnity, and real importance of its petitions, is without an equal or a rival*." They teach us, moreover, what we all feel to be true, that the human heart is weak and corrupt; that man is fallen from his original innocence; that he is restored, however, to the favour of God, and the capacity of happiness, by the death and mediation and atonement of Christ, who is the way, the truth, and the life; and that he will be assisted in his sincere, though imperfect, endeavours after holiness, by the influence of God's holy Spirit.

They assure us, in fine, that the soul does not perish with the body, but shall pass, after death, into another world; that all mankind shall rise from the grave, and stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, who shall reward the virtuous, and punish the wicked, in a future and eternal state of existence, according to their deserts.

These are great, and interesting, and momentous truths, either wholly unknown, or but

* Paley.

but very imperfectly known to the world before; and they render the meanest peasant in this country better acquainted with the nature of the Supreme Being, and the relation in which we stand to him, than were any of the greatest sages of ancient times.

Equally excellent, and superior to all other rules of life, are the moral precepts of the gospel.

Our divine Master, in the first place, laid down two great leading principles for our conduct, love to God, and love to mankind; and thence deduced (as occasions offered, and incidents occurred, which gave peculiar force and energy to his instruction) all the principal duties towards God, our neighbour, and ourselves.

With respect to God, we are commanded to love, fear, worship, and obey him; to set him always before us; to do all things to his glory; to seek first his kingdom and his righteousness; to resign ourselves wholly to his pleasure, and submit, with patience, cheerfulness, and resignation, to every thing he thinks fit to bring upon us.

With regard to our neighbour, we are to

exercise

exercise towards him the duties of charity, justice, equity, and truth; we are to love him as ourselves, and to do unto all men as we would they should do unto us; a most admirable rule, which comprehends the sum and substance of all social virtue, and which no man can mistake.

As to those duties which concern ourselves, we are commanded to keep ourselves unspotted from the world, to be temperate in all things, to keep under our body, and bring it into subjection, to preserve an absolute command over all our passions, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

These are the general directions given for our conduct in the various situations and relations of life. More particular injunctions are given in various parts of Scripture, especially in our Saviour's admirable sermon from the mount, where we find a multitude of most excellent rules of life, short, sententious, solemn, and important, full of wisdom and dignity, yet intelligible and clear. But the principal excellence of the gospel morality, and that which gives it an infinite superiority over all other moral instructions, is this: that it prefers

prefers a meek, yielding, complying, forgiving temper, to that violent, overbearing, inflexible, imperious disposition, which prevails so much in the world; that it regulates not merely our actions, but our affections and our inclinations, and places the check to licentiousness exactly where it ought to be, that is, on the heart; that it forbids us to covet the praise of men in our devotions, our alms, and all our other virtues; that it gives leading rules and principles for all the relative duties of life, of husbands and wives, of parents and children, of masters and servants, of christian teachers and their disciples, of governors and subjects; that it commands us to be, as it were, lights in the world, and examples of good to all; to injure no man, but to bear injuries patiently; never to seek revenge, but return good for evil; to love our very enemies, and to forgive others as we hope to be forgiven; to raise our thoughts and views above the present life, and to fix our affections principally on that which is to come.

But besides all this, the *manner* in which our Lord delivered all his doctrines and all his precepts; the concise, sententious, solemn,

 weighty

weighty maxims into which he generally compressed them; the easy, familiar, natural, pathetic parables in which he sometimes clothed them; that divine authority, and those awful sanctions with which he enforced them: these circumstances give a weight, and dignity, and importance to the precepts of holy writ, which no other moral rules can boast.

If now we ask, as it is very natural to ask, who that extraordinary person could be, that was the author of such uncommonly excellent morality as this? The answer is, that he was, to all outward appearance, the reputed son of a carpenter, living with his father and mother in a remote and obscure corner of the world, till the time that he assumed his public character. "Whence, then, had this man these things, and what wisdom is this that was given unto him?" He had evidently none of the usual means or opportunities of cultivating his understanding or improving his mind. He was born in a low and indigent condition, without education, without learning, without any ancient stores from whence to draw his wisdom and his morality, that were at all likely to fall into his hands. You may, perhaps, in

some

some of the Greek or Roman writers, pick out a few of his precepts, or something like them. But what does this avail? Those writers he had never read. He had never studied at Athens or at Rome; he had no knowledge of orators or philosophers. He understood, probably, no language but his own, and had nothing to give him juster notions of virtue and religion, than the rest of his countrymen and persons in his humble rank of life usually had. His fellow-labourers in this undertaking, the persons who assisted him during his life, and into whose hands his religion came after his death, were a few fishermen on the lake of Tiberias, as unlearned and uneducated, and, for the purpose of framing rules of morality, as unpromising as himself. Is it possible, then, that such men as these could, without any assistance whatever, produce such perfect and incomparable rules of life as those of the gospel; so greatly superior in purity, solidity, perspicuity, and universal usefulness, to all the moral lessons of all the philosophers upon earth put together? Every man of common sense must see that this is absolutely impossible; and that

there

there is no other conceivable way of accounting for this, than by admitting what these persons constantly affirmed, that their doctrines and their precepts came from the fountain of all perfection; that is, from God himself.

PRO-

PROPOSITION VII.

THE rapid and successful Propagation of the Gospel by the first Teachers of it through a large part of the World, is a Proof that they were favoured with Divine Assistance and Support.

WE find in the Acts of the Apostles, and in their Epistles, that the number of converts to the christian religion began to increase considerably, almost immediately, after our Saviour's ascension, and continued increasing to an astonishing degree through every age till the final establishment of christianity by Constantine. The first assembly which we meet with of Christ's disciples, and that a few days after his removal from the world, consisted of 120*. About a week after this, 3,000 were added in one day†; and the number of christians publicly baptized, and publicly associating together, were very soon increased to 5,000‡. In a few years after this the converts were described as increasing in great

* Acts i. 15. † 2 Acts ii. 41. ‡ Acts iv. 4.

great numbers, in great multitudes, and even in myriads, tens of thousands*: and multitudes both of men and women continued to be added daily; so that within about thirty years after our Lord's death, the gospel was spread, not only throughout almost all parts of the Roman empire, but even to Parthia and India. It appears from the Epistles written to several churches by the apostles, that there were large congregations of christians, both at Rome and in all the principal cities of Greece and Asia. This account is confirmed by contemporary Roman historians: and Pliny, about eighty years after the ascension, complains that this *superstition*†, as he calls it, had seized not cities only, but the lesser towns also, and the open country; that the pagan temples were almost deserted, the sacred solemnities suspended, and scarce any purchasers to be found for the victims. About twenty years after this, Justin Martyr, a christian writer, declares, that there was no nation of men, whether Greeks or barbarians, not excepting

* Acts xxi. 20.

† The very name by which *modern* pagans, as well as their predecessors, the ancient heathens, describe the christian religion.

excepting even those savages that wandered in clans from one region to another, and had no fixed habitation, who had not learned to offer prayers and thanksgivings to the Father and Maker of all, in the name of Jesus, who was crucified. And thus the church of Christ went on increasing more and more, till, under Constantine, the empire became christian; at which time, there is every reason to believe that the christians were more numerous and more powerful than the pagans.

In what manner, now, can we account for this wonderful and unexampled progress of the christian religion?

If this religion had set out with flattering the corrupt passions of mankind, and held up to them the prospect of power, wealth, rank, or pleasure, as the rewards of their conversion; if it had soothed their vices, humoured their prejudices, and encouraged their ancient superstitions; if the persons who taught it had been men of brilliant talents, or commanding eloquence; if they had first proposed it in times of darkness and ignorance, and among savage and barbarous nations; if they had been seconded by all the influence and

authority

authority of the great potentates of the earth, or propagated their doctrines at the head of a victorious army; one might have seen some reason for their extraordinary success.

But it is well known that the very reverse of all this was the real truth of the case. It is well known, that the first preachers of the Gospel declared open war against all the follies, the vices, the interests, the inveterate prejudices, and favourite superstitions of the world; that they were (with few exceptions) men of no abilities, no learning, no artificial rhetoric or powers of persuasion; that their doctrines were promulgated in an enlightened age, and to the most polished nations, and had all the wit and learning, and eloquence and philosophy of the world to contend with; and that, instead of being aided by the authority and influence of the civil powers, they were opposed, and harassed, and persecuted by them, even to death, with the most unrelenting cruelty; and all those who embraced their doctrines were exposed to the same hardships and sufferings.

Is it now credible, that, under these circumstances, twelve poor illiterate fishermen of

Galilee

Galilee should be able, merely by their own natural powers, to spread their new religion in so short a space, over so large a part of the then known world, without any assistance or co-operation from any quarter whatever? Did any thing of the kind ever happen in the world, before or since? It is plainly unprecedented and impossible. As, therefore, all *human* means of success were against them, what else but *supernatural* means were left for them? It is clear almost to demonstration, that they must have been endowed with those miraculous powers, and favoured with that divine assistance, to which they pretended, and which of course proved them to be the messengers of Heaven.

PRO-

PROPOSITION VIII.

A COMPARISON between Christ and Mahomet, and their respective Religions, lead us to conclude, that as the Religion of the latter is confessedly the Invention of Man, that of the former is derived from God.

THERE is a religion in the world, called The Mahometan, which is professed in one part of Europe, and most parts of Asia and Africa. The founder of this religion, Mahomet, pretended to be a prophet sent from God; but it is universally allowed by all who are not Mahometans, and who have searched very carefully into the pretensions of this teacher, that he was an enthusiast and an impostor, and that his religion was a contrivance of his own. Even those persons who reject Christianity, do not think Mahometanism to be true; nor do we ever hear of a deist embracing it from conviction.

Here, then, we have two religions coexisting together in the world, and both pretending to be revelations from Heaven; one of these we know to be a fraud, the other we affirm

 and

and believe to be true. If this be so, upon comparing them and their authors together, we may expect to find a most marked and essential difference between them, such a difference as may naturally be supposed to exist between an impostor and a divine teacher, between truth and falsehood. And this, I apprehend, will appear to be actually the case with respect to Christ and Mahomet, and their respective religions.

Mahomet was a man of considerable rank in his own country; he was the grandson of a man of the most powerful and honourable family in Mecca, and, though not born to a great fortune, he soon acquired one by marriage. These circumstances would of themselves, without any supernatural assistance, greatly contribute to the success of his religion. A person considerable by his wealth, of high descent, and nearly allied to the chiefs of his country, taking upon himself the character of a religious teacher in an age of ignorance and barbarism, could not fail of attracting attention and followers.

Christ did not possess these advantages of rank and wealth, and powerful connections.

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He was born of parents in a very mean condition of life. His relations and friends were all in the same humble situation; he was bred up in poverty, and continued in it all his life, having frequently no place where he could lay his head. A man so circumstanced was not likely, by his own personal influence, to force a new religion, much less a false one, upon the world.

Mahomet indulged himself in the grossest pleasures. He perpetually transgressed even those licentious rules which he had prescribed to himself. He made use of the power he had acquired to gratify his passions without control, and he laid claim to special permission from Heaven to riot in the most unlimited sensuality.

Jesus, on the contrary, preserved throughout life the most unblemished purity and sanctity of manners. He did no sin, but was perfectly holy and undefiled. Not the least stain was ever thrown on his moral character by his bitterest enemies.

Mahomet was violent, impetuous, and sanguinary.

Christ was meek, gentle, benevolent, and merciful.

Mahomet pretended to have secret communications with God, and with the angel Gabriel, which no other person ever saw or heard.

Jesus was repeatedly declared to be the Son of God by voices from heaven, which were plainly and distinctly heard and recorded by others.

The appearance of Mahomet was not foretold by any ancient prophecies, nor was there at the time any expectation of such a person in that part of the world.

The appearance of Christ upon earth was clearly and repeatedly predicted by several ancient prophecies, which most evidently applied to him and to no other; and which were in the keeping of those who were professed enemies to him and his religion. And there was at the time of his birth a general expectation over all the East, that some great and extraordinary personage would then manifest himself to the world.

Mahomet never presumed to foretel any

future

future events, for this plain reason, because he could not foresee them; and had he foretold any thing which did not come to pass, it must have entirely ruined his credit with his followers.

Christ foretold many things which did actually come to pass, particularly his own death and resurrection, and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Mahomet never pretended to work miracles; on the contrary, he expressly disclaimed any such power, and makes several laboured and aukward apologies for not possessing it.

Jesus, we all know, worked a great number of the most astonishing miracles, in the open face of day, and in the sight of great multitudes of people. He made the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, the lame to walk, the blind to see, and even the dead to rise from the grave.

Mahomet, during the first twelve years of his mission, made use only of argument and persuasion, and in consequence of that, gained very few converts. In three years he made only fourteen proselytes, and in seven only eighty-three men and eighteen women.

In

In the same space of time, our Saviour and his apostles converted thousands and tens of thousands, and spread the christian religion over a great part of Asia.

Mahomet told the Jews, the christians, and the Arabs, that he taught no other religion than that which was originally taught to their forefathers, by Abraham, Ishmael, Moses, and Jesus. This would naturally prejudice them in favour of his religion.

Christ preached a religion which directly opposed the most favourite opinions and prejudices of the Jews, and subverted, from the very foundation, the whole system of pagan superstition.

Mahomet paid court to the peculiar weaknesses and propensities of his disciples. In that warm climate, where all the passions are ardent and violent, he allowed them a liberal indulgence in sensual gratifications: no less than four wives to each of his followers, with the liberty of divorcing them thrice*.

In the same climate, and among men of the same strong passions, Jesus most peremptorily restrained all his followers from adultery, fornication,

* Koran, c. 4. p. 42. Ib. c. 2. p. 41.

nication, and every kind of impurity. He confined them to one wife, and forbade divorce, except for adultery only. But what was still more, he required them to govern their eyes and their thoughts, and to check the very first rising of any criminal desire in the soul. He told them, that whoever looked upon a woman to lust after her, had committed adultery with her already in his heart; and he assured them, that none but the pure in heart should see God. He declared open war, in short, against all the criminal passions, and evil inclinations of mankind, and expressly required all his followers to renounce those favourite sins that did most easily beset them; nay, even to leave father, mother, brethren, sisters, houses, lands, and every thing that was most dear to them, and take up their cross and follow him.

With the same view above-mentioned of bribing men to embrace his religion, Mahomet promised to reward his followers with the delights of a most voluptuous paradise, where the objects of their affection were to be almost innumerable, and all of them gifted with transcendent beauty and eternal youth*.

* Koran, c. 56, p. 613.

Christ

Christ entirely precluded his disciples from all hopes of sensual indulgences hereafter, assuring them that in heaven they should neither marry nor be given in marriage, and promising them nothing but pure, celestial, spiritual joys, such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.

Besides the powerful attractions of sensual delights, Mahomet had another still more efficacious mode of producing conviction, and gaining proselytes: and that was force, violence, and arms. He propagated his religion by the sword; and, till he made use of that instrument of conversion, the number of his proselytes was a mere nothing. He was at once a prophet, a warrior, a general, and a conqueror. It was at the head of his armies that he preached the Koran. His religion and his conquests went on together; and the former never advanced one step without the latter. He commanded in person in eight general engagements, and undertook, by himself and his lieutenants, fifty military enterprises. Death or conversion was the only choice offered to idolaters, and tribute or conversion to Jews and Christians.

Jesus employed no other means of converting

ing men to his religion, but persuasion, argument, exhortation, miracles, and prophecies. He made use of no other force but the force of truth, no other sword but the sword of the Spirit, that is, the word of God. He had no arms, no legions to fight his cause. He was the prince of peace, and preached peace to all the world. Without power, without support, without any followers but twelve poor humble men, without one circumstance of attraction, influence, or compulsion, he triumphed over the prejudices, the learning, the religion of his country; over the ancient rites, idolatry, and superstition, over the philosophy, wisdom, and authority of the whole Roman empire.

The great object of Mahomet was to make his followers soldiers, and to inspire them with a passion for violence, bloodshed, vengeance, and persecution. He was continually exhorting them to fight for the religion of God; and, to encourage them to do so, he promised them the highest honours, and the richest rewards in paradise. "They who have suffered for my sake, and have been slain in battle, verily I will expiate their evil deeds from them, and I will surely bring them into a garden watered

by

by rivers, a reward from God, and with God is most excellent reward*." This duty of warring against infidels is frequently inculcated in the Koran, and highly magnified by the Mahomedan divines, who call the sword *the key of heaven and hell*, and persuade their people that the least drop of blood spilt in the way of God, as it is called, is most acceptable unto him; and that the defending the territories of the Moslems for one night, is of more avail than a fast of two months†. It is easy to see to what a degree of fierceness this must raise all the furious vindictive passions of the soul, and what a horde of savages and barbarians it must let loose upon mankind.

The directions of Christ to his disciples were of a different temper. He positively forbade them the use of any violence whatever. The sword that was drawn by one of them in his defence he ordered to be sheathed: "Put up thy sword within the sheath; they that use the sword shall perish by the sword‡." He would not consent to bring down fire from heaven

* Koran, ch. 3. p. 91. and ch. 9. p. 242.
† Sale's Prelim. Diss. s. 11. p. 189.
‡ Matt. xxvi. 52.; John xviii. 11.

heaven on the Samaritans, who had refused to receive him: "The Son of Man," he told them, "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you. Do violence to no man; resist not evil. Be ye merciful, even as your Father in heaven is merciful. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy *."

The consequence was, that the first followers of Mahomet were men of cruelty and violence, living by rapine, murder, and plunder. The first followers of Jesus were men of meek, quiet, inoffensive, peaceable manners, and in their morals irreproachable and exemplary.

If now, after comparing together the authors of the two religions we have been considering, we take a short view of the sacred books of those religions, the Koran and the Gospel, we shall find a difference no less striking between them; no less strongly marking the truth of the one and the falsehood of the other.

The Koran is highly applauded, both by Mahomet himself and his followers, for the exquisite

* Luke ix. 56. John xiv. 27. Luke iii. 14. Matt. v. 39. Luke vi. 36. Matt. v. 7.

exquisite beauty, purity, and elegance of the language, which they represent as a standing miracle, greater than even that of raising the dead. But admitting its excellence (which yet has been questioned by several learned men) if beauty of style and composition is to be considered as a proof of divine inspiration, the writings of Plato and Xenophon, of Cicero and Cæsar, and a multitude of other inimitable writers in various languages, will have as just a claim to a miraculous origin as the Koran. But in truth, these graces of diction, so far from being a circumstance favourable to the Koran, create a strong suspicion of its being a human fabrication, calculated to charm and captivate men by the arts of rhetoric and the fascination of words, and thus draw off their attention from the futility of its matter, and the weakness of its pretensions. These are the artifices of fraud and falsehood. The Gospel wants them not. It disdains the aid of human eloquence, and depends solely on the force of truth and the power of God for its success. "I came not (as St. Paul sublimely expresses himself) with excellency of speech; nor with the enticing words of man's wisdom,

wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*."

But, whatever may be the purity of the language, the matter and substance of the Koran cannot bear a moment's comparison with that of the Gospel. The narrative is dull, heavy, monotonous, uninteresting; loaded with endless repetitions, with senseless and preposterous fables, with trivial, disgusting, and even immoral precepts. Add to this, that it has very little novelty or originality to recommend it, the most material parts of it being borrowed from the Scriptures of the Old Testament or the New; and even these are so disguised and deformed by passing through the hands of the impostor (who vitiates and debases every thing he touches) that you can hardly know them to be the same incidents or transactions that you read with so much delight in the Bible.

The Gospel, on the contrary, is every where concise, simple, original, animated, interesting, dignified; its precepts important, its morality perfect,

* 1 Cor. ii. 1, 4, 5.

perfect, its sentiments sublime, its views noble and comprehensive, its sanctions awful!

In the Koran, Mahomet is perpetually boasting of his own merits and achievements, and the supreme excellence of his book. In the Gospel no encomiums are bestowed by the evangelists, either on themselves or their writings. Even the virtues of their divine Master are not distinctly specified, or brought forward into a conspicuous point of view. It is from his actions only, and his discourses, not from the observations of his historians, that we can collect the various transcendent excellencies of his character. Here we plainly see the sober modesty of truth opposed to the ostentatious vanity of imposture.

In the description of future rewards and punishments, the Koran is minute, circumstantial, and extravagant, both in painting the horrors of the one and the delights of the other. It describes things which cannot, and ought not to be described, and enters into details too horrible or too licentious, to be presented to the human mind.

In the Gospel the pains and the pleasures of

of a future life are represented concisely, in strong, but general and indefinite terms, sufficient to give them a powerful, but not an overwhelming influence over the mind.

There is still another, and a very material mark of discrimination between the Koran and the Gospel. Mahomet shews throughout the utmost anxiety to guard against objections, to account for his working no miracles, and to defend his conduct, in several instances, against the charges which he suspects may be brought against him. This is always the case with imposture. It is always suspicious, afraid of being detected, alive to every appearance of hostility, solicitous to anticipate, and eager to repel the accusations of enemies.

Truth has no occasion for such precautions, and therefore never uses them. We see nothing of this sort in the Gospel. The sacred historians shew not the smallest solicitude, nor take the least pains to obviate cavils or remove difficulties. They relate plainly and simply what they know to be true. They entertain no doubt of it themselves, and seem to have no suspicion that any one else can doubt it; they therefore leave the facts to speak for themselves,

themselves, and send them unprotected into the world, to make their way (as they have done) by their own native force and incontrovertible truth.

Such are the leading features of Mahomet and his religion on the one hand, and of Christ and his religion on the other; and never was there a stronger or more striking contrast seen than in this instance. They are, in short, in every essential article, the direct opposites of each other. And as it is on all hands acknowledged that Mahomet was an impostor, it is fair to conclude that Christ, who was the very reverse of Mahomet, was the reverse of an impostor, that is, a real messenger from Heaven. In Mahomet we see every distinctive mark of fraud: in Jesus, not one of these is to be found; but, on the contrary, every possible indication and character of truth.

PRO-

PROPOSITION IX.

THE Predictions delivered by the ancient Prophets, and fulfilled in our Saviour, shew that he was the Messiah expected by the Jews, and that he came into the world by Divine Appointment, to be the great Deliverer and Redeemer of Mankind.

THE word MESSIAH signifies anointed; that is, a person appointed to some high station, dignity, or office; because originally among the eastern nations men so appointed (particularly kings, priests, and prophets) were anointed with oil. Hence the word Messiah means the person preordained and appointed by God to be the great deliverer of the Jewish nation, and the Redeemer of all mankind. The word CHRIST means the same thing.

Now it was foretold concerning the Messiah, that he should come before the sceptre departed from Judah, that is, before the Jewish government was destroyed*; and accordingly Christ appeared a short time before the period when the Jewish government was totally overthrown by the Romans.

* Gen. xlix. 10.

It was foretold, that he should come before the destruction of the second temple. "The "Desire of all Nations shall come, and I will "fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of "Hosts; the glory of this latter house shall "be greater than of the former*." Accordingly Christ appeared some time before the destruction of the city and the temple of Jerusalem by the Romans.

It was foretold by the prophet Daniel, that he should come at the end of 490 years after the rebuilding of Jerusalem, which had been laid waste during the captivity of the Jews in Babylon, and that he should be cut off; and that afterwards the city and sanctuary of Jerusalem should be destroyed and made desolate†. And accordingly, at what time soever the beginning of the 490 years can, according to any fair interpretation of the words, be fixed, the end of them will fall about the time of Christ's appearing; and it is well known how entirely the city and sanctuary were destroyed by the Romans some years after he was cut off and crucified.

It was foretold, that he should perform many great and beneficial miracles; that the eyes

* Haggai ii. 7. 9. † Dan. ix. 26.

eyes of the blind should be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; that the lame man should leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing*; and this we know was literally fulfilled in the miracles of Christ; the blind received their sight, the lame walked, the deaf heard.

It was foretold, that he should die a violent death; that he should be wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; that the chastisement of our peace should be upon him; and that with his stripes we should be healed; that God would lay on him the iniquity of us all†. All which was exactly accomplished in the sufferings of Christ, "who died for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God‡."

It was foretold, that to him should the gathering of the people be; and that God would give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession§, which was punctually fulfilled by the wonderful success of the gospel, and its universal propagation throughout the world.

Lastly,

* Isaiah xxxv. 5.
† Isaiah liii. throughout; and Dan. ix. 26.
‡ 1 Pet. iii. 18. § Psalm ii. 8.

Lastly, many minuter circumstances were foretold of the great Deliverer, or Redeemer that was to come.

That he should be born of a virgin; that he should be of the tribe of Judah and the seed of David; that he should be born in the town of Bethlehem; that he should ride upon an ass in humble triumph into the city of Jerusalem; that he should be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; that he should be sold for thirty pieces of silver; that he should be scourged, buffeted, and spit upon; that he should be numbered with the transgressors (that is, should be crucified, as he was, between two thieves); that he should have gall and vinegar given him to drink; that they who saw him crucified should mock at him, and at his trusting in God to deliver him; that the soldiers should cast lots for his garments; that he should make his grave with the rich; and that he should rise again without seeing corruption*. All these circumstances, it is well known, were foretold, and to

* Isaiah vii. 14; Mich. v.; Zech. ix. 9; Isaiah liii. 3; Zech. xi. 12; Isaiah l. 6; Isaiah liii. 12; Psalm lxix. 22; Psalm xxiv. 7. 18; Isaiah liii. 9; Psalm xvi. 10.

to the greatest possible exactness, fulfilled in the person of Christ.

What now shall we say to these things? Here are upwards of twenty different particulars, many of them of a very extraordinary nature, which it was foretold, 700 years before our Saviour was born, would all meet in him, and which did all actually meet in his person. Is not this a most extraordinary consideration? There are but three possible suppositions that can be made concerning it; either that this was a mere fortuitous coincidence, arising entirely from chance and accident, or that these prophecies were written after the events had taken place; or, lastly, that they were real predictions, delivered many years before these events came to pass, and all fulfilled in Christ. That any one should by chance hit upon so many things, which should all prove true, and prove true concerning one and the same person, though several of them were of such a nature as were unlikely to happen *singly*, and by far the greatest part of which had never before happened *singly* to *any person whatever;* this, I say,

I say, exceeds all bounds of credibility, and all power of conjecture or calculation.

That these prophecies were not written or delivered after the things predicted had happened is most certain; because they are found in books which existed long before those events came to pass, that is, in the books of the Old Testament: and the Jews themselves, the mortal enemies of Christ and his religion, acknowledge that these prophecies were in those books, exactly as we now see them, many hundred years before Christ came into the world.

The books themselves were in their own keeping, in the keeping of our adversaries, who would undoubtedly take effectual care that nothing favourable to Christ should be fraudulently inserted into them. The Jews were our librarians. The prophecies were in their custody, and are read in all their copies of the Old Testament as well as in ours. They have made many attempts to *explain* them away, but none to question their authenticity.

It remains then that these are all real pre-

dictions, all centering in our Saviour, and in him only, and delivered many centuries before he was born. As no one but God has the foreknowledge of events, it is from him these prophecies must have proceeded; and they shew, of course, that Christ was the person whom he had for a great length of time predetermined to send into the world to be the great Deliverer, Redeemer, and Saviour of mankind.

PRO-

PROPOSITION X.

The Prophecies delivered by our Saviour himself, prove that he was endued with the Foreknowledge of future Events; which belongs only to God and to those inspired by him.

He did very particularly, and at several different times, foretel his own death, and the circumstances of it; that the chief priests and scribes should condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles, that is, to Pilate and the Roman soldiers, to mock, and scourge, and crucify him; that he should be betrayed into their hands; that Judas Iscariot was the person who should betray him; that all his disciples would forsake him, and flee; and that Peter would particularly thrice deny him in one night. He foretold further, that he would rise again the third day; that, after his ascension, he would send down the Holy Ghost on his apostles, which would enable them

them to work many miracles. He foretold, likewise, many particulars concerning the future success of the gospel, and what should happen to several of his disciples; he foretold what opposition and persecution they should meet with in their preaching; he foretold what particular kind of death Peter should die, and intimated that St. John should live (as he did) till after the destruction of Jerusalem; he foretold, that notwithstanding all opposition and persecution, the gospel should yet have such success, as to spread itself over the world; and, lastly, he foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, with such very particular and minute circumstances, in the 24th chapter of St. Matthew, the 13th of St. Mark, and the 21st of St. Luke, that no one who reads the description of that event, in the historians of those times, can have the smallest doubt of our Saviour's divine foreknowledge. We have a most authentic, exact, and circumstantial account of the siege and destruction of that city by the Romans, written by Josephus, a Jewish and contemporary historian; and the description he has given of this terrible calamity so perfectly

corresponds

corresponds with our Saviour's prophecy, that one would have thought, had we not known the contrary, that it had been written by a christian, on purpose to illustrate that prediction.

This power of foretelling future events is a plain proof that Christ came from God, and was endued with this power from above.

PROPOSITION XI.

THE Miracles performed by our Lord, demonstrate him to have possessed Divine Power.

ALTHOUGH the preceding propositions contain very convincing proofs of the divine mission of Christ, and the divine authority of his religion, yet, undoubtedly, the strongest evidence of this arises from the wonderful and well-attested miracles which he wrought from the beginning to the end of his ministry. He cured the most inveterate diseases; he made the lame to walk; he opened the eyes of the blind and the ears of the deaf; he cast out devils; he walked upon the sea; he fed five thousand persons with a few small loaves and fishes, and even raised the dead to life again. These miracles were all wrought in open day, in the sight of multitudes of witnesses, who could not be imposed upon in things

things which they saw plainly with their own eyes, who had an opportunity of scrutinizing them, as much as they pleased, and who did actually scrutinize them with a most critical exactness, as appears from the very remarkable instance of the blind man restored to sight by our Lord, in the ninth chapter of St. John, a transaction which I recommend very earnestly to the attention of my readers.

It is true, that miracles being very unusual and extraordinary facts, they require very strong evidence to support them; much stronger, it must be owned, than common events, that are recorded in history: and accordingly the miracles of Christ *have* this very strong and extraordinary evidence to support them: evidence such as is not to be equalled in any other instance, and such as is fully competent to prove the reality of the greatest miracle that ever was performed.

Besides a multitude of other persons, who were eye-witnesses to these miracles, and who were actually convinced and converted by them, there were twelve persons, called apostles; plain, honest, unprejudiced men; whom our

our Saviour chose to be his constant companions and friends, who were almost always about his person, accompanied him in his travels, heard all his discourses, saw all his miracles, and attended him through all the different scenes of his life, death, and resurrection, till the time of his ascension into heaven. These persons were perfectly capable of judging whether the works which they saw Jesus perform were real miracles or not; they could tell whether a person whom they had known to be blind all his life was suddenly restored to sight by our Saviour's only speaking a word or touching his eyes; they could tell whether he did actually, in open daylight, walk upon the sea without sinking, and without any visible support; whether a person called Lazarus, whom they were well acquainted with, and whom they knew to have been four days dead and buried, was raised to life again merely by Christ saying, *Lazarus, arise.*

In these, and other facts of this sort, they could not possibly be deceived. Now these, and many other miracles, equally astonishing, they affirm that they themselves actually saw

performed

performed by our Saviour. In consequence of this, from being Jews, and of course strongly prejudiced against Christ and his outward appearance, which was the very reverse of every thing they expected in their Messiah, they became his disciples; and on account of their conversion, and more particularly on account of their asserting the truth of his miracles and his resurrection, they endured for a long course of years the severest labours, hardships, sufferings, and persecution, that human nature could be exposed to, and at last submitted to the most cruel and excruciating deaths; all which they might easily have avoided, if they would only have said that Christ was *not* the son of God, that he never worked any miracles, and never rose from the dead. Yet this they refused to say, and were content to die rather than say it*.

Is not this giving the strongest proof of their sincerity, and of the reality of Christ's miracles, that human nature, and human testimony

* No man ever laid down his life for the honour of Jupiter, Neptune, or Apollo; but how many thousands have sealed their christian testimony with their blood!—Beattie, vol. ii.

timony are capable of giving? The concurrent and uncontradicted testimony of twelve such witnesses is, according to all the rules of evidence, sufficient to establish the truth of any one fact in the world, however extraordinary, however miraculous.

If there had been any powerful temptation thrown in the way of these men; if they had been bribed, like the followers of Mahomet, with sensual indulgences; or, like Judas Iscariot, with a sum of money, one should not have been much surprised at their persisting, for a time at least, in a premeditated falsehood. But when we know that instead of any of these allurements being held out to them, their Master always foretold to them, and they themselves soon found by experience, that they could gain nothing, and must lose every thing in this world, by embracing Christianity; it is utterly impossible to account for their embracing it on any other ground than their conviction of its truth from the miracles which they saw. In fact, must they not have been absolutely mad to have incurred voluntarily so much misery, and such certain destruction, for affirming things

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to be true, which they knew to be false; more especially as their own religion taught them, that they would be punished most severely in another world, as well as in this, for so wicked a fraud? Is it usual for men thus to sport with their own happiness, and their very lives, and to bring upon themselves, with their eyes open, such dreadful evils, without any reason in the world, and without the least possible benefit, advantage, credit, or pleasure resulting from it? Where have you ever heard of any instance of this sort? Would any twelve men you ever knew, especially men of credit and character, take it into their heads to assert that a certain person in the neighbourhood raised a dead man to life, when they knew that no such thing had ever happened; and that they would all, with one consent, suffer themselves to be put to death rather than confess that they had told a lie? Such a thing never happened since the world began. It is contrary to all *experience* and all credibility, and would be in itself a greater miracle than any of those that are recorded in the Gospel.

It is certain then (as certain as any thing

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can be that depends on human testimony) that real miracles were wrought by Christ; and as no miracles can be wrought but by the power of God, it is equally certain that Christ and his religion drew their origin from God*.

* On the clear and evident marks of discrimination between the real miracles of the Gospel, and the pretended miracles of paganism and of popery, see bishop Douglas's Criterion, and Dr. Paley's most masterly observations, in his View of the Evidences of Christianity, prop. 1. ch. ii. b. i. p 329.

PROPOSITION XII.

The Resurrection of our Lord from the Dead, is a Fact fully proved by the clearest Evidence, and is the Seal and Confirmation of his Divinity, and of the Truth of his Religion.

The resurrection of Christ being one of those miracles which are recorded in the Gospel, the truth of it is, in fact, already proved by what has been advanced respecting those miracles in the preceding article. But it is an event so singular in its nature, and so infinitely important in its consequences, that it well deserves to be made the subject of a distinct proposition.

After our Saviour's crucifixion, Joseph of Arimathea, we are told, laid the body in his own new tomb, hewn out of a rock, and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre. In order to secure themselves against any fraud, the Jews desired the Roman governor, Pilate,

Pilate, to grant them a band of soldiers to guard the sepulchre, lest, as they said, the disciples should come by night and steal the corpse away. Pilate's answer was in these words, "Ye have a watch, go your way, make it as sure as you can; so they went and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch*." The evangelist then proceeds to relate the great event of the resurrection with that ingenuous and natural simplicity which characterizes the sacred historians, and which carries upon the face of it every mark of sincerity and truth.

"In the end of the Sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalen and the other Mary, to see the sepulchre. And behold there was a great earthquake; for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door, and sate upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow. And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. And the angel of the Lord answered, and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I

* Matt. xxvii. 65, 66.

 know

know that ye seek Jesus that was crucified. He is not here, for he is risen from the dead; and behold he goeth before you into Galilee, there ye shall see him. Lo! I have told you. And as they went to tell his disciples, behold Jesus met them, saying, All hail! and they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid; go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there they shall see me. Now, when they were going, behold some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all that was done. And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, saying, Say ye, his disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept; and if this come to the governor's ear, we will persuade him and secure you. So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews unto this day*."

Such is the relation of this wonderful fact given by St. Matthew, which comprehends not

* Matt. xxviii. 1—16.

not only his own account of it, but that also which was circulated in opposition to it by the chief priests and rulers of the Jews. Here then we have fairly before us the two different representations of this event by the friends and by the enemies of Christ; of which the former asserts that it was a real resurrection, the other that it was a fraud; and between these two we must form our opinions; for no third story has been set up, that we know of, by any one.

One thing is agreed on by both sides, viz. that the body was not to be found in the sepulchre. It was gone; and the question is, by what means? The soldiers gave out that the disciples "came by night, while they slept, and stole it away." But it is not very easy to understand how the soldiers could depose to any thing that passed while they were fast asleep; they could not possibly tell in what manner the body was stolen away, or by whom. Nor, considering the extreme severity of the Roman military discipline, is it credible, that if they had been asleep they would have confessed it. For it was certain death to a Roman soldier to be found sleeping upon guard.

Nothing

Nothing could have prevailed upon them to make such a declaration as that, but a previous promise of impunity and reward from the Jewish rulers; a plain proof that they had been tampered with, and that it was a concerted story.

In the next place, supposing the story true, of what use could the dead body be to the disciples? It could not prove to them, or to others, that their Master was risen from the dead; on the contrary, it must have been a standing and a visible proof of the contrary. It must convince them that he, instead of being the deliverer they expected, was an impostor, and they most cruelly deceived. And why they should choose to keep in their possession, and to have continually before their eyes a lifeless corpse, which completely blasted all their hopes, and continually reminded them of their bitter disappointment, is somewhat difficult to be imagined.

The tale then, told by the soldiers, is, upon the very face of it, a gross and clumsy forgery. The consequence is, that the account given by St. Matthew is the true one. For, if the body was actually gone (an acknow-

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ledged point on all sides) and if it was not, as we have proved, stolen away by the disciples, there are but two possible suppositions remaining; either that it was taken away by the Jews and Romans, or that it was raised to life again by the power of God. If the former had been the case, it could only have been for the purpose of confronting and convicting the disciples of falsehood and fraud by the production of the dead body. But the dead body was *not* produced. It was therefore, as the Gospel affirms, raised from the grave, and restored to life. There is no other conceivable alternative left.

And that this was actually the case, is proved by our Lord's appearing, after his resurrection, not only to the two women, who came first to the sepulchre, but to the two disciples going to Emmaus, and to the disciples assembled together at two different times, and to all the apostles, and to above 500 brethren at once. And he not only appeared to them silently, but he talked and ate with them; he shewed them his hands and his feet; he made them handle him; he held several long conversations with them; and

and, at last, ascended up into heaven in their sight.

These were things of which the plainest and most ignorant men could judge. It was impossible for them to be deceived in an object with which they were well acquainted, and which presented itself to all their senses.

But there is another most decisive proof, arising from their own conduct, that they were perfectly convinced of the reality of our Lord's resurrection.

It appears that the Apostles were far from being men of natural courage and firmness of mind. When our Lord was apprehended, all his disciples, we are told, forsook him, and fled. Peter followed him afar off, and went into a hall in the palace of the high priest, where the servants warmed themselves, and being there charged with being a disciple of Jesus, he peremptorily denied it three times with vehemence and with oaths. It does not appear that any of his disciples attended in the judgment-hall to assist or to support him; and when he was crucified, the only persons that ventured to stand near his cross were his mother, and two or three other women, and

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St. John. They all, in short, appeared dismayed and terrified with the fate of their Master, afraid to acknowledge the slightest connection with him, and utterly unable to face the dangers that seemed to menace them. But immediately after the resurrection of their Lord, a most astonishing change took place in their conduct. From being the most timid of men, they suddenly became courageous, undaunted, and intrepid; they boldly preached that very Jesus whom but a short time before they had deserted in his greatest distress; and although his crucifixion was fresh before their eyes, and they had reason to expect the same or a similar fate, yet they persisted in avowing themselves his disciples, and told the Jews publicly, "that God had made that same Jesus whom they had crucified both Lord and Christ*;" and when they were brought before the rulers and elders to be examined respecting the lame man whom they had cured at the gate of the temple, "Be it known unto you all (said they) and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye

* Acts ii. 36.

ye crucified, and whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you all. This is the stone that was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head-stone of the corner; neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved*."

And when a second time they were brought before the council, and forbidden to teach in the name of Jesus, their answer was, "We ought to obey God rather than men. And when they were again reprimanded and threatened, and beaten, yet they ceased not in the temple, and in every house, to teach and to preach Jesus Christ; and with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus†."

In what manner now shall we account for this sudden and most singular change in the disposition, and as it were in the very constitution of the Apostles? If Christ had not risen from the grave, and his dead body was in the possession of his disciples, was this calculated to

* Acts iv. 10, 11, 12.

† Acts v. 29, 42.—and iv. 33.

to inspire them with affection for their leader, and with courage to preach a doctrine which they knew to be false? Would it not, on the contrary, have increased their *natural timidity*, depressed their spirits, extinguished all their zeal, and filled them with indignation and horror against a man who had so grossly deceived them, and robbed them, under false pretences, of every thing that was dear and valuable to them in the world? Most unquestionably it would. Nor is it possible to account, in any rational way, for the strange revolution which took place in their minds, so soon after their Master's death, but by admitting that they were fully persuaded and satisfied that he rose alive from the grave.

It may be said, perhaps, that this persuasion was the effect not of irresistible evidence, but of enthusiasm, which made them fancy that some visionary phantom, created solely by their own heated imagination, was the real body of their Lord restored to life. But nothing could be more distant from enthusiasm than the character and conduct of these men, and the courage they manifested, which was perfectly calm, sober, collected, and cool.

cool. But what completely repels this suspicion is, that their bitterest adversaries never once accused them of enthusiasm, but charged them with a crime which was utterly inconsistent with it, fraud and theft; with stealing away the body from the grave. And if they did this, if that dead body was actually before their eyes, how was it possible for any degree of enthusiasm short of madness (which was never alleged against them) to mistake a dead body for a living man, whom they saw, and touched, and conversed with? No such instance of enthusiasm ever occurred in the world.

The resurrection of our Lord being thus established on the firmest grounds, it affords an unanswerable proof of the truth of our Saviour's pretensions, and consequently, of the truth of his religion: for had he not been what he assumed to be, the Son of God, it is impossible that God should have raised him from the dead, and thereby given his sanction to an imposture. But as he did actually restore him to life, he thereby set his seal to the divinity which he claimed, and acknowledged him, in the most public and

authoritative

authoritative manner, to be "his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased*."

And this evidence of our Lord's divine mission is of the more importance, because our Saviour himself appealed to it as the grand proof of his being sent from heaven to instruct and to redeem mankind. For when he cast the buyers and sellers out of the temple, and the Jews required of him a sign, that is, a miraculous proof, that he had the authority of God for doing those things, his answer was, "Destroy this temple (meaning his body) and in three days I will raise it up. When, therefore, he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them: and they believed the Scriptures, and the word which Jesus had said†;" and they themselves constantly referred to the resurrection more than to any other evidence, as the great foundation on which their faith was built.

The reason for this, perhaps, was, that this great event contained in itself, at once, the evidence both of miracle and of prophecy. It was certainly one of the most stupendous mani-

* Matt. iii. 17. † John ii. 19. 22.

manifestations of divine power that could be presented to the observation of mankind; and it was, at the same time, the completion of two most remarkable prophecies; that of our Saviour's above mentioned, and that well-known one of king David's, which St. Peter expressly applies to the resurrection of Christ: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy Holy One to see corruption*."

* Psalm xvi. 10. Acts ii. 27. On this subject of Christ's resurrection I must again refer my readers to Dr. Paley, vol. ii. ch. ix. p. 209; and also to the conclusion of his work; the force of which it seems to me scarce possible for an unprejudiced reader to withstand.

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CONCLUSION.

THESE are the principal proofs of the truth of the Christian Religion. Many others of a very satisfactory nature might be added; but the question may be safely rested on those that have here been stated.

And when we collect them all together into one point of view; when we consider the deplorable ignorance and inconceivable depravity of the heathen world before the birth of Christ, which rendered a divine interposition essentially necessary, and therefore highly probable; the appearance of Christ upon earth, at the very time when his presence was most wanted, and when there was a general expectation throughout the East, that some great and extraordinary personage was soon to come into the world; the transcendent excellence of our Lord's character, so infinitely beyond that of every other moral teacher; the calmness, the composure, the dignity, the integrity, the

the spotless sanctity of his manners, so utterly inconsistent with every idea of enthusiasm or imposture; the sublimity and importance of his doctrines; the consummate wisdom and perfect purity of his moral precepts, far exceeding the natural powers of a man born in the humblest situation, and in a remote and obscure corner of the world, without learning, education, languages, or books; the rapid and astonishing propagation of his religion, in a very short space of time, through almost every region of the East, by the sole efforts of himself, and a few illiterate fishermen, in direct opposition to all the power, the authority, the learning, the philosophy, the reigning vices, prejudices, and superstitions of the world; the complete and marked opposition, in every essential point, between the character and religion of Christ, and the character and religion of Mahomet, exactly such as might be expected between truth and falsehood; the minute description of all the most material circumstances of his birth, life, sufferings, death, and resurrection, given by the ancient prophets many hundred years before he was born, and exactly fulfilled in him, and him

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only, pointing him out as the Messiah of the Jews and the Redeemer of mankind; the various prophecies delivered by Christ himself, which were all punctually accomplished, more especially the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; the many astonishing miracles wrought by Jesus, in the open face of day, before thousands of spectators, the reality of which is proved by multitudes of the most unexceptionable witnesses, who sealed their testimony with their blood, and was even acknowledged by the earliest and most inveterate enemies of the Gospel; and lastly, that most astonishing and well-authenticated miracle of our Lord's Resurrection, which was the seal and confirmation of his own Divine Origin, and that of his Religion; when all these various evidences are brought together, and impartially weighed, it seems hardly within the power of a fair and ingenuous mind to resist the impression of their united force. If such a combination of evidences as this is not sufficient to satisfy an honest inquirer into truth, it is utterly impossible that any event, which passed in former times, and which we did not see with our own eyes, can ever be

proved to have happened, by any degree of testimony whatever. It may safely be affirmed, that no instance can be produced of any one fact or event, said to have taken place in past ages, and established by such evidence as that on which the Christian Revelation rests, that afterwards turned out to be false. We challenge the enemies of our faith to bring forward, if they can, any such instance. If they cannot (and we know it to be impossible) we have a right to say, that a religion, supported by such an extraordinary accumulation of evidence, must be true; and that all men, who pretend to be guided by argument and by proof, are bound, by the most sacred obligations, to receive the religion of Christ as a real revelation from God.

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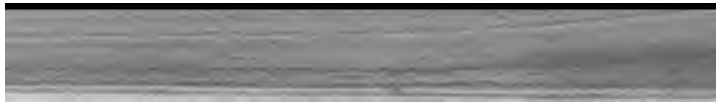

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